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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Special cell soon at BBMP, BDA to fix potholes: CM

Officials told to fill 6,000 potholes in City by May end

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said that a special cell will be set up in the civic bodies Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to maintain roads in Bengaluru and fill up potholes. With monsoon round the corner, officials have been instructed to fill over 6,000 potholes on City roads, and repair bad stretches, by the end of this month, he said.

Siddaramaiah, along with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and other ministers and officials, inspected the City that faces flooding during rains.

"According to a census by the Bengaluru city corporation, in ward roads there are 5,500 potholes, and in arterial and sub-arterial roads there are 557 potholes," he said. "There are some 67 bad reaches in the City, and all of them will be repaired immediately."

Stating that monsoon showers will start from June, Siddaramaiah said, the pre-monsoon showers from 1 May led to flooding in some parts of the City.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar inspect a stormwater drain in the City on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

The City has 860 km of stormwater drains, he said, adding that when he was the CM earlier, 491 km of it were cleared from encroachments and redeveloped. "The previous (BJP) government took steps to clear 193 km in January 2023 and the work is to be completed in January 2025. If this work had been done earlier, there would have been no problem," he said.

Rs 1,800 crore is being spent on this stormwater drain work, and 174 km is left, Siddaramaiah said, adding that the World Bank will grant about Rs 2,000 crore for the project.

Shivakumar, who is in-charge of Bengaluru Development, said, "The government will not give any compensation to those who have encroached upon the rajakaluve. The funds will be used for clearing the encroachment, desilting and construction of new kaluve."

He added, "We have set up a new online mechanism where citizens can share photos of potholes with BBMP officials. Traffic police can also report potholes."

About 12 cases are in civil court regarding the stormwater drain project. Siddaramaiah said, "Lawyers are attending this to vacate the stays and if necessary, a special lawyer will be appointed for the cases to be settled. For about 12.15 km there are cases pending in court."

Engineers at the city corporation have been warned that they will be made responsible if there are any lapses.

He added that instructions have been given to clear encroachments from lakes. The City had 400 lakes. —*PTI*

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'SUPPRESSED FACTS'

After SC rap, Soren withdraws bail plea

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Supreme Court declined to entertain former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's petition on Wednesday as it noted the petitioner has not disclosed the facts that the trial court has taken cognisance of the chargesheet in the matter and his bail plea is pending in special court.

A bench of justices, Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma, noted the facts that Soren, in his petition seeking interim bail and challenging his arrest, has concealed various facts related to the matter

After the top court was not convinced to give any relief to Jharkhand politicians, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal for Soren withdrew the petition seeking interim bail. While withdrawing the petition, Senior Advocate Sibal urged the top court to see when his bail application came before High Court, which then decided after a month.

The court questioned the conduct of the petitioner for not disclosing the proper facts related to his bail plea before it and noted that Soren had applied for bail in the trial court as well as in the top court.

Hemant Soren **PHOTO: PTI**

The top court remarked that Soren was pursuing parallel remedies as he had applied for bail before a special court and came to the top court for interim bail. The apex court remarked that Soren's conduct is not without blemish and that it is blameworthy conduct, as they did not disclose before the top court that cognizance had been taken by the special court and bail had been moved.

Sibal defended his client and said that he is in custody and that he is not in touch with them. The senior advocate for Sibal further said it was not Soren's fault but his. Soren had approached the top court against the Jharkhand High Court decision, which rejected his plea challenging arrest in a money laundering case. —*PTI*

Norway, Ireland & Spain recognise Palestinian state

TEL AVIV, 22 MAY

Norway, Ireland and Spain said on Wednesday they are recognising a Palestinian state, in a historic but largely symbolic move that deepens Israel's isolation more than seven months into its grinding war against Hamas in Gaza. The announcements came as the chief prosecutor of International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defense Minister and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is considering allegations of genocide that Israel has strenuously denied. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Cong vows to probe Adani 'coal scam' after INDIA wins

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Congress on Wednesday attacked the Modi government over Financial Times reporte that Adani Group passed off low-quality coal as far more expensive cleaner fuel in transactions with the public sector Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO).

Congress said that a joint parliamentary committee will be set up within one month of an INDIA government taking office to probe such allegations.

Financial Times report citied documents secured by Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).

Adani made excess profits of Rs 3,000 crore from this while the common person was made to suffer overpriced electricity and elevated air pollution, Congress alleged.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claimed that Modi's favourite friend Adani has looted thousands of crores of rupees by selling low-grade coal at three times the price.

The report stated that Adani had been buying the coal from Indonesia at $28 a tonne. However, when the ship carrying coal arrived India, Adani had sold the coal to TANGEDCO priced at $92 a tonne.

Gautam Adani **PHOTO: PTI**

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Will Modi tell how many tempos were used to keep ED, CBI, and IT quiet on this open corruption?"

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said as the election momentum of the INDIA coalition accelerates, the tempo of revelations about the 'Modani Mega Scam' has also picked up.

Adani Group's market capitalisation on Wednesday regained USD 200 billion-mark (Rs 16.9 lakh crore) after its listed firms gained Rs 11,300 crore as investors reposed faith on the company denying any wrongdoing in supply of coal to Tamil Nadu power company.

With Rs 11,300 crore gain on Wednesday, the apples-to-airport conglomerate gained Rs 56,250 crore in market capitalisation in the last two trading sessions, stock exchange data showed. —*PTI*

4 of Mysuru family die due to gas leak

MYSURU, 22 MAY

Four people of a family were found dead in their house, due to suspected LPG cylinder leak, at Yarganahalli in Mysuru on Wednesday.

The deceased are Kumaraswamy, 45; his wife Manjula, 39; and their children Archana, 19; and Swati, 17.

Kumaraswamy and Manjula, who operated a small ironing business from their home, kept three LPG gas cylinders for their work at home. It is suspected that one of these cylinders leaked.

The family was found dead on Wednesday after they did not receive calls made by the neighbours and relatives.

A neighbour, upon receiving a call from a relative, went to check on the family and discovered the bodies through a window. The 10x20 size house lacked proper ventilation, exacerbating the effects of the gas leak. —*Salar News*

The deceased Archana, Kumaraswamy, Manjula and Swati

PHOTO: PTI

EC TELLS BJP AND CONGRESS TO AVOID RELIGIOUS SPEECHES

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed BJP President JP Nadda and Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge to issue formal notes to star campaigners to correct their discourse, exercise care and maintain decorum.

This is the Commission's unprecedented orders to BJP and Congress in the wake of plummeting quality of campaigning led by their star campaigners. EC has come down heavily on both BJP and Congress for campaigning along caste, community, language, and religion.

ECI has also asked the BJP to stop campaign speeches that may lead to division in society.

EC has directed Congress to ensure that star campaigners do not make statements that give false impressions such as the Constitution of India may be abolished or sold.

Moreover, while speaking on Agniveer scheme, the poll body has asked Congress campaigners or candidates not to politicise the defence forces. —*ANI*

Shah Rukh Khan hospitalised after heatstroke

AHMEDABAD, 22 MAY

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan was admitted to a hospital in Ahmedabad on Wednesday after suffering from a heatstroke, police said. He was admitted to multi-speciality KD Hospital, they said. Khan was in Ahmedabad on Tuesday to attend an IPL match of his KKR team at Narendra Modi Stadium. Ahmedabad recorded temperature of 45.9 degrees on Wednesday. KKR entered their fourth IPL final with a thumping eight-wicket win over SH in Qualifier 1 here on Tuesday. Videos showed Khan celebrating his team's triumph with a lap of honour, with his children —*PTI*

MISSING B'DESH MP FOUND DEAD IN KOLKATA

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

Bangladesh MP Anwarul Azim, who allegedly went missing on 18 May, was found dead in Kolkata on Wednesday. He was in Kolkata for a medical check-up.

Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said the murder was premeditated, and three people have been arrested in Bangladesh. CID is investigating.

The police learnt about his diappearnace after his acquaintance in Kolkata filed a complaint on 18 May. Sources said he was accompanied by two men and a woman when he checked into the apartment. —*PTI*

Continued on Page 4

HC cancels OBC certificates issued after 2010 in Bengal

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday cancelled all OBC certificates issued in West Bengal after 2010.

The court has directed the West Bengal Backward Classes Commission to prepare a new list of OBCs in accordance with the 1993 Act.

Those who were in the OBC list before 2010 will remain. However, after 2010, OBC nominations have been cancelled.

About five lakh OBC certificates are set to be cancelled.

After 2010, those who have jobs under the OBC quota or are in the process of getting them cannot be excluded from the quota.

There will be no impact on their job and they cannot be excluded from the quota.

Hours later, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she will not accept the judgement and "OBC reservation continues and will always continue".

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi is saying that minorities will take away the Tapasheeli reservation, can this ever happen? Minorities can never touch the Tapasheeli or tribal reservation, but these mischievous people (BJP) get their work done through agencies, they have got the order through someone but I will not accept this opinion... Those who have given the order should keep it to themselves, we will not accept the opinion of BJP, OBC reservation continues and will always continue," she said. —*ANI*

Aus boy gets first human case of bird flu in India

CANBERRA, 22 MAY

Australia has announced the first confirmed case of human bird flu in a child who is believed to have acquired it while in India some weeks ago, according to a media report on Wednesday. The child is no longer unwell. The H5N1 strain of avian flu, responsible for devastating billions of bird populations worldwide and infecting various mammal species, was identified in the child. Health officials in Victoria, Australia, assured the public that contact tracing had not revealed any further cases, and the likelihood of the virus spreading between people remains very low. —*PTI*

ADR REPORT SAYS

Women are less than 10 pc of candidates

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Less than 10 per cent of the candidates contesting in the on-going Lok Sabha elections are women, according to an analysis of data shared by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).Of the 8,337 candidates analysed, only 797 are women, representing a mere 9.5 per cent of the total candidates contesting across the seven phases of the elections.

This is the first election since the passage of the women's reservation bill to reserve one-third of seats in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, reviving a bill pending for 27 years for want of consensus among parties. The bill is yet to come into effect.

Significant gender imbalance has sparked criticism from political analysts and activists, who questioned why political parties are waiting for the women's reservation bill to be implemented instead of proactively issuing tickets to women.

Iftekhar Ahmad Ansari, Associate Professor at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), saidbeyond symbolic gestures and promises, he stressed the importance of structural reforms to ensure equal opportunities for women in politics. —*PTI*

INDIA'S RICHEST LS CANDIDATE

CHANDRA SEKHAR PEMMASANI,
TDP
Seat: Guntur

Pemmasani was born in Burripalem village in Guntur. He completed his MBBS from the Dr NTR University of Health Sciences in 1999 and went on to receive an MD in internal medicine from the Geisinger Medical Centre in Pennsylvania, USA, in 2005. Pemmasani is the founder and CEO of UWorld, an online learning platform. He founded the company at the age of 25. He joined politics following in his father's footsteps. He was an active leader in the TDP NRI cell and organised programmes in America. Pemmasani won the Ernst and Young Award as a entrepreneur in 2020 in the US.

Govt fines Nadella, LinkedIn and 8 others

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The corporate affairs ministry on Wednesday slapped fines on Microsoft-owned LinkedIn India, Satya Nadella and eight other individuals for violation of the significant beneficial owner norms under the companies' law.

Nadella is the Chief of Microsoft, which acquired the professional networking platform LinkedIn in December 2016.In a 63-page order, the Registrar of Companies ((NCT of Delhi & Haryana) said that LinkedIn India and the individuals violated the Significant Beneficial Owner (SBO) norms under the Companies Act, 2013.

According to the order, the company and its officers are liable for action for the failure to take necessary steps to identify the SBO in relation to the company.The RoC has slapped penalties totalling Rs 27, 10,800 on LinkedIn Technology Information Pvt Ltd or LinkedIn India, Nadella, LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky and seven other individuals.

For SBO norms violations, a penalty of Rs 7 lakh has been slapped on LinkedIn India. Fines of Rs 2 lakh each have been imposed on Nadella and Roslansky, respectively.

Other individuals who have been fined are Keith Ranger Dolliver, Benjamin Owen Orndorff, Michelle Katty Leung, Lisa Emiko Sato, Ashutosh Gupta, Mark Leonard Nadres Legaspi and Henry Chining Fong. —*PTI*

Indian Embassy in Cambodia issues advisory on frauds

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Embassy of India Phnom Penh has issued an advisory for job seekers in Cambodia about fake jobs involving Cyber-crimes. Stephen Monthero, 22, from Koppa in Chikkamagaluru was one such victim. He was rescued by Indian authorities in December 2023. Indian Embassy in Cambodia has rescued 60 Indian nationals who fell prey to fraudulent job offers in the country. According to the latest advisory by embassy "It has come to attention that Indian nationals, lured by fake promises of lucrative job opportunities in Cambodia, are falling into the trap of human traffickers". These Indian nationals are coerced to undertake online financial scams and other illegal activities. Indian nationals intending to visit Cambodia for employment are cautioned to do so only through authorised agents. It is also advised that the background of the prospective employer in Cambodia is checked thoroughly. Indian nationals are also advised not to indulge in practices contrary to the purpose for which the visa is granted by the host government, such as seeking employment on a 'Tourist Visa' For any assistance, Embassy of India, Phnom Penh, Cambodia may be contacted through e-mail id: OR visa.phnompenh@mea.gov.in and cons.phnompenh@mea.gov.in Emergency Mob No.: +855 92881676. *—Salar News*

Docs remove 4.5kg uterine tumour from 45-yr-old

C'NAGAR, 22 MAY

The doctors at Kabbahalli Community Health Centre in Chamarajanagar's Gundlupet taluk removed a 4.5kg uterine tumour that had extended up to the bladder in a 45-year-old woman. The patient Puttamma is from Nanjangudu taluk in Mysuru. Typically, uterine tumours develop either on the surface or inside the uterus. However, in this case, it was positioned between her uterus and bladder, with parts of it adhering to both organs. Dr Venkataswamy of the Kabbahalli Health Centre performed a 2.5-hour-long operation to remove the tumour. "This was a rare case, and the removal of the tumour was challenging," he said, adding, "The patient is in good health. This marks the first such difficult surgery undertaken at the Kabbahalli Community Health Center." *—Salar News*

IAF inaugurates 1st-ever emergency medic system

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari has inaugurated its first-ever Emergency Medical Response System of the Indian Air Force at Command Hospital Air Force, a Defence Ministry release said on Wednesday. The Emergency Medical Response System (EMRS), which was inaugurated on 21 May, has been set up in order to provide expert guidance and definitive care during medical emergencies of serving personnel and their families of the Indian Air Force (IAF) across the nation. The Ministry of Defence in the release said that the EMRS is a first-of-its-kind 24/7 telephonic medical helpline for serving IAF personnel and their families across India. The system aims to provide prompt response by a team of medical and paramedical professionals to the caller experiencing the emergency anywhere across the country. The event featured a demonstration of the system's capability and outreach, highlighting the ease with which expert guidance would be provided to the distressed caller, as well as the expeditious launch of a medical support team from the nearest medical echelon. *—PTI*

CORRIGENDUM

In the story titled 'ECI must hold transparent polls: Activists' published on 21 May, the picture caption wrongly identified economist Parakala Prabhakar as former Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan. The error is deeply regretted.

Ahead of monsoon, CM pulls up officials

Notices issued to parties for delaying projects

BENGALURU, 18 APRIL

Reviewing Ejipura flyover project, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah issued a notice to the contractors, demanding an explanation for the 15-month delay and the completion of only six per cent of the work. Siddaramaiah warned that if the contractors failed to provide a satisfactory explanation, he would cancel their tenders and reassign the project to others.

He and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar were inspecting monsoon preparedness and reviewing the ongoing civic projects in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

They were accompanied by top officials from Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), and Bangalore Development Authority (BDA).

The Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and the team visited Vijayanagar, BTM Layout, Bommanahalli and Shantinagar Assembly constituencies on a BMTC bus. Siddaramaiah issued notices to the parties responsible for the delayed projects and set a deadline for their completion. The Chief Minister instructed that all potholes on ward, arterial and sub-arterial roads must be filled within one month.

Currently, there are 5,500 potholes on ward roads and 557 potholes on arterial and sub-arterial roads. During his visit to Vijayanagar constituency, Siddaramaiah allotted Rs 11.5 crore for constructing a canal parallel to a rajakaluve to prevent flooding at Shri Gali Anjaneya Swamy Temple in Deepanjali Nagar.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar with BBMP officials went around the City to check the precautionary measures ahead of monsoon season **PHOTO: SALAR**

Siddaramaiah warned BBMP engineers of suspension if they didn't complete the canal by June-July.

Siddaramaiah also announced Rs 7 crore for constructing canals near Nayandahalli flyover by the end of this year to avoid flooding. To avoid flooding during the monsoon at Kodichikkanahalli, the Chief Minister announced Rs 4.3 crore to install pump sets.

A total of Rs 4.5 crore was allotted to improve the drainage system near Silk Board Metro Station near Hosur main road.

—Salar News

SEEKS CRIMINAL CASE

JD(S) complains against RaGa for Prajwal 'raped 400' remark

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

JD(S) on Wednesday complained to Karnataka DGP Alok Mohan against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly claiming that Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual abuse, has "raped 400 women".

In a complaint, HM Ramesh Gowda, a former MLC and party's Bengaluru City president has sought registration of a criminal case against Gandhi under section 202 (Intentional omission to give information of an offence by a person legally bound to inform) of Indian Penal Code for his alleged statement while addressing election rallies in the district headquarters of Shivamogga and Raichur on 2 May. JD(S) leader also cited the alleged statement by Gandhi in his complaint, "Prajwal Revanna has raped 400 women and made videos. This is not a sex scandal but mass rape. And the Prime Minister, in front of the people of Karnataka, was supporting and seeking vote for this mass rapist. He is saying that if you vote for this mass rapist, it would help him."

Rahul Gandhi **PHOTO: PTI**

The complainant said that in the interest of justice for the alleged victims, Gandhi being a public servant is duty bound to give information of offence.

The 33-year-old Prajwal, who is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former PM HD Deve Gowda and is NDA's candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing charges of multiple instances of sexually abusing women. The cases came to light after a number of explicit videos of sexual assault allegedly by Prajwal became public.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is currently probing these cases. "Till date, SIT has also not issued any notice to Rahul Gandhi calling for such information for the statement made by Rahul Gandhi," the complaint stated. *—PTI*

Centre mum on cancellation of Prajwal's passport request: HM

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara said there is no response yet from the Centre on the request seeking the cancellation of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna's diplomatic passport. Prajwal is facing charges of sexual abuse of women, based on an arrest warrant issued against him by a court.

He said it is the duty of the Centre to provide help within the framework of law, by cancelling the diplomatic passport.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the state government to probe the serial sex abuse charges against the MP, had written to the Ministry of External Affairs to cancel his diplomatic passport. *—PTI*

Return & face probe: HDK appeals to Prajwal again

MYSURU, 22 MAY

JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday once again appealed to his nephew and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually abusing women, to return from abroad and face the investigation. The former CM said there are no differences between his party and its alliance partner, BJP, over the allegations against Prajwal Revanna. "This case has nothing to do with the alliance." Prajwal, 33, who is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda and is NDA candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment. A 'Blue Corner Notice' seeking information on his whereabouts has already been issued by Interpol, following a request by the SIT via Central Bureau of Investigation. "When he (Prajwal) was in Karnataka, he never came to me, now that he is somewhere abroad will he come to my contact?" Kumaraswamy told reporters here. *—PTI*

The City has reported 67.34 crore free rides by women till 20 May **PHOTO: PTI**

Metro ridership up 30% despite Shakti scheme: Min

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Karnataka Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy has said that Metro Rail ridership has increased by 30 per cent in the past one year, despite the 'Shakti' guarantee offering free rides to Karnataka women to travel across the State on non-luxury government buses.

Reddy was reacting to a reported statement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said that free travel for women in government buses will affect Metro Rail revenues.

According to Reddy, the Shakti guarantee was implemented in the State on 11 June, 2023, and since then the City has reported 67.34 crore free rides by women till 20 May.

"In January 2023, the number of Metro rail passengers was 1.65 crore and the revenue was Rs 39.15 crore. In April 2024, the number of passengers increased to two crore and the revenue increased to Rs 51.71 crore," Reddy said in a statement.

According to him, there has been an increase of 35 lakh passengers per month in 2024 compared to 2023, and revenue has increased by Rs 1.10 crore per month.

He said it was "not proper" for the prime minister to "suffer from prejudice" and blame the scheme. "Modi is trying to create misconception among people that only those schemes announced by BJP are good, but people know the truth," Reddy said. *—PTI*

Sole Muslim MP since 2004 Iqbal Ahmed Saradgi dies

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Iqbal Ahmed Saradgi **PHOTO:SALAR**

Karnataka's sole Muslim Member of Parliament since 2004 Iqbal Ahmed Saradgi died on Wednesday. The 80-year-old Congress veteran died at a private hospital in Kalaburagi.

Ahmed represented Kalaburagi constituency twice and he died due to age-related illness. The funeral prayer (Namaz e Janaza) was held at a local mosque near Haft Gumbaz. All India Congress Committee President Mallikarjun Kharge, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar offered their condolences.

Taking to X, Kharge said, "Deeply pained by the passing away of my dear friend. Iqbal championed the cause of welfare for all and in this hour of grief my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and followers."

Sivakumar also expressed his condolences. "Sad to hear the news of the death of the senior leader of our party. Sardagi was a prominent leader of Kalyan Karnataka segment and served as a member of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Parishad."

Born to Mohammed Ahmed Saradagi and Gauhar Begam on 5 June, 1944, Saradagi got his Bachelor of Arts degree from Government Arts and Science College in Kalaburagi and his law degree from Osmania University, Hyderabad. *—Salar News*

WAR OF WORDS

Never did 'dirty jobs': CM on HDK's phone tapping claims

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Rejecting the phone tapping allegations made by JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he has never indulged in such a "dirty job" in his political life so far, and will not in the future too.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, he accused former chief minister Kumaraswamy of making false claims to divert attention from the cases of sexual abuse against his nephew and MP Prajwal Revanna.

Kumaraswamy on Monday had alleged that 40 phones, including his own and those of his family members and supporters, are being tapped. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara have dismissed these claims.

BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Tuesday demanded a CBI probe into the phone-tapping allegations.

In response to an unrelated question about the elections, Siddaramaiah said that to take stock of the Lok Sabha polls, Shivakumar, who is also the Congress's State President, has invited all the ministers, including him, for a dinner meeting later today.' *—PTI*

Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

- Kumaraswamy on Monday had alleged that 40 phones, including his own and those of his family members and supporters, are being tapped. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara have dismissed these claims.

POONJA'S HOUSE RAIDED FOR RUCKUS AT POLICE STATION

MANGALURU, 22 MAY

A police team raided the residence of BJP MLA Harish Poonja in Dakshina Kannada district on Wednesday and allegedly questioned him in connection with a case relating to creating ruckus at Belthangady police station.

On 19 May, Poonja allegedly barged into the police station and demanded the release of an associate who was involved in illegal quarry mining. Scores of BJP workers gathered in front of Poonja's house on Wednesday after the news of his impending 'arrest' spread.

The MLA was served a notice asking him to appear at the police station to attend an inquiry session, in two days.

An FIR was registered against the BJP legislator. *—PTI*

DESPITE HEALTH RISKS

Eateries, pubs defy liquid nitrogen ban

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Two weeks after Department of Food Safety and Quality banned using liquid nitrogen for serving food, many eateries at VV Puram, Indiranagar and Marathahalli continue to use this dangerous liquid.

A bar situated near Ashok Nagar uses the chemical for preserving food and to present food appealingly. "We use liquid nitrogen for preserving frozen desserts and on cocktails that are served. People love to buy liquid nitrogen-infused smoky cocktails as they come in fancy presentations. We use it in limited quantities as there are no harmful side effects of it. Till now we have not had any bad experience with any of our customers," the manager of the bar said.

When **Salar News** talked to a couple of food lovers, many were unaware of the ban. Reshmi Prasad, who works in a PR company in City, said: "I always eat fancy ice creams that are served with a smoky effect in it. But I was not aware that they used the liquid nitrogen in it."

Speaking to **Salar News**, an official of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said: "FSSAI has empowered the designated officers to take immediate action against any food business operator found using liquid nitrogen for direct consumption. The public can contact the toll-free helpline number 1800 11 2100 or send an email to kumaresan.ch@fssai.go.in for any complaint regarding food safety concerns."

A bar situated near Ashok Nagar uses the chemical for preserving food and to make food presentation appealing **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

What is liquid nitrogen?

Liquid Nitrogen is cryogenic liquid that is kept at a temperature of about -196 degrees Celsius. It is a colourless, odourless and non-flammable liquid that is used in food as preservatives. The chemical is used by various food industries as preservatives.

Liquid nitrogen is commonly used in:

Cocktails, smoke biscuits, frozen fruits, ice creams, popcorns, peanut butter, dried (dehydrated) vegetables and fruits, carbonated drinks, frozen foods, any packaged food like chips, wafers, frozen fancy desserts in restaurants, coffee, buttermilk and cheese.

Severe internal injuries

Dr Kasthuri Prasad, a gastroenterologist at Dayanand Sagar Hospital, Harohalli told Salar News that liquid nitrogen can cause severe internal injuries.

"When liquid nitrogen enters the body, it rapidly evaporates into gas, causing a sudden expansion that can lead to severe internal injuries, including perforation or rupture of the digestive tract. This can result in excruciating abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and potentially life-threatening complications like pneumothorax (a condition where the air leaks between the lungs and chest walls leading to a chest injury)."

Dr Shibi Dev, an ENT specialist at Nethradhama Eye Hospital, said: "The gas emitted by liquid nitrogen when exposed to air can cause oxygen levels to drop, leading to headaches, light-headedness, and even loss of consciousness. Ingesting liquid nitrogen can cause severe burns and frostbite to the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and stomach lining, while contact with the skin or eyes can result in severe cold burns and frostbite."

In Bengaluru, surgery was performed on a 12-year-old girl to repair a perforation peritonitis - a hole in the stomach — after she consumed smoke paan with liquid nitrogen. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Kanhaiya assault case: Court grants bail to accused

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

A court has granted bail to the 41-year-old man arrested for allegedly assaulting and splashing Congress Lok Sabha candidate Kanhaiya Kumar with ink, saying it has to balance the state's interest of maintaining public order with the accused's right to personal liberty. On 17 May, when Kumar, Congress candidate for the North East Delhi seat, was coming out of ally Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) office in New Usmanpur, a group of people attacked him. The Delhi Police arrested Ajay Kumar, on Tuesday morning. Metropolitan Magistrate Arushi Parwal heard city police's application seeking Ajay Kumar's judicial custody for 14 days on Tuesday. The investigating officer) said it was necessary to prevent him from committing similar offences. *— PTI*

Probe ordered over security breach of Assam strong room

GUWAHATI, 22 MAY

Assam government on Wednesday will conduct an inquiry related to security breach inside the strong room of Nalbari district during the poll day on 7 May, according to an official communique. Home and Political Department Principal Secretary B Kalyan Chakravarthy has been entrusted to carry out the probe related to the security breach on the polling day. Asking Nalbari District Commissioner Varnali Deka to be present, Home & Political Department on Tuesday night said that the inquiry proceedings will start at 4pm on Wednesday. On May 14, Congress' Barpeta candidate Deep Bayan had complained to the Election Commission of India urging to probe an alleged breach of the strong room, a police complaint lodged by Deka.*— PTI*

Special court extends remand of J'khand min Alam

RANCHI, 22 May

The Special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court here on Wednesday extended the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) remand of Jharkhand Minister Alamgir Alam for five days in an alleged money laundering case, lawyers said. Alam was arrested after two days of grilling by the ED on 15 May at the agency's office. He was remanded to the custody of the central agency for six days by the PMLA court on 16 May, which started from 17 May. *—PTI*

Chargesheet against Kerala Cong MLA for rape

T'PURAM, 22 MAY

The Crime Branch wing of the Kerala police on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against Perumbavoor MLA and Congress leader Eldhose Kunnappilly in the case of rape of a woman. In the chargesheet filed before the Neyyattinkara Additional sessions court, the Crime Branch has also named two of his friends as accused. The charge sheet says that Kunnappilly raped the woman multiple times at various places and even tried to murder her after an altercation at Kovalam. Police had registered a case against the two-time legislator after the woman complained that she was raped multiple times since July 2022. Besides rape and attempt to murder, the Congress MLA has also been charged with assault, following a complaint from the alleged victim who stated Kunnappilly had abducted and manhandled her. The victim has also claimed that Kunnappilly offered her Rs 30 lakh to settle the case registered against him. *—PTI*

IT'S INDIA VS NDA

Army does not want Agniveer scheme: RaGa

'We will throw it in dustbin'

MAHENDRAGARH, 22 MAY

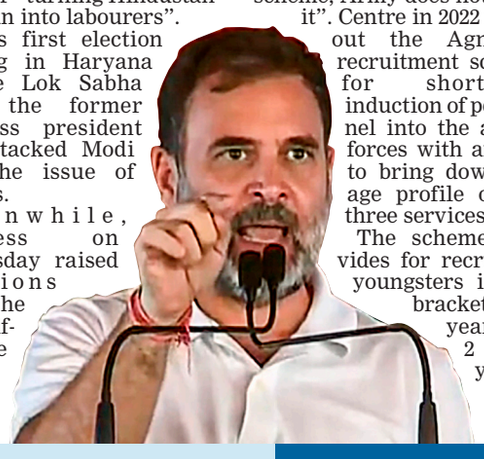
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said the Agniveer scheme will be scrapped and thrown into dustbin if INDIA bloc comes to power as he slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "turning Hindustan ke jawan into labourers".

In his first election meeting in Haryana for the Lok Sabha polls, the former Congress president also attacked Modi over the issue of farmers.

Meanwhile, Congress on Wednesday raised questions over the big difference between the real time voter turnout data and the final figures released by Election Commission, and said voters are worried over the "strange goings-on" in the poll body.

Slamming BJP government over the Agniveer scheme, he said, "This is Modi's scheme and not Army's scheme, Army does not want it". Centre in 2022 rolled out the Agnipath recruitment scheme for short-term induction of personnel into the armed forces with an aim to bring down the age profile of the three services.

The scheme provides for recruiting youngsters in age bracket of 17 years to 21 years. *–PTI*



TMC gave OBC certificates to Muslims: Modi

'Sikhs were burnt alive'

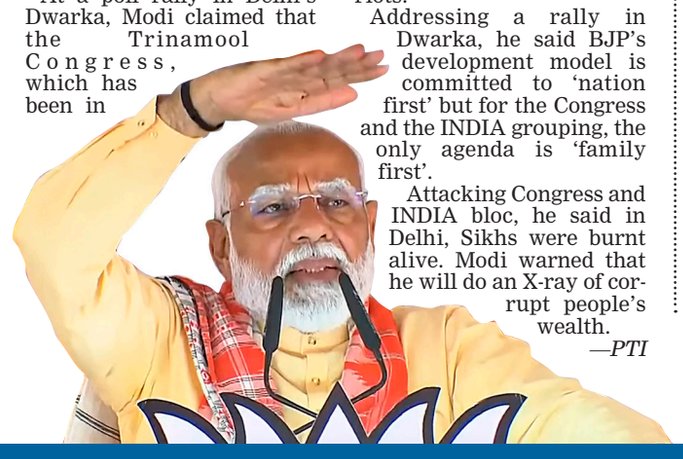
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday targeted the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal over the Calcutta High Court judgment that cancelled all OBC certificates issued in the state after 2010.

At a poll rally in Delhi's Dwarka, Modi claimed that the Trinamool Congress, which has been in power in the state since 2011, gave OBC certificates to Muslims for their vote bank Modi on Wednesday tore into INDIA bloc accusing it of being extremely "communal, casteist and nepotistic" as he alleged that all parties which are with the Congress are to be blamed for the anti-Sikh riots.

Addressing a rally in Dwarka, he said BJP's development model is committed to 'nation first' but for the Congress and the INDIA grouping, the only agenda is 'family first'.

Attacking Congress and INDIA bloc, he said in Delhi, Sikhs were burnt alive. Modi warned that he will do an X-ray of corrupt people's wealth. *—PTI*



PM lying, Cong won't raze Ram Temple: Kharge

'Party respects all religions'

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

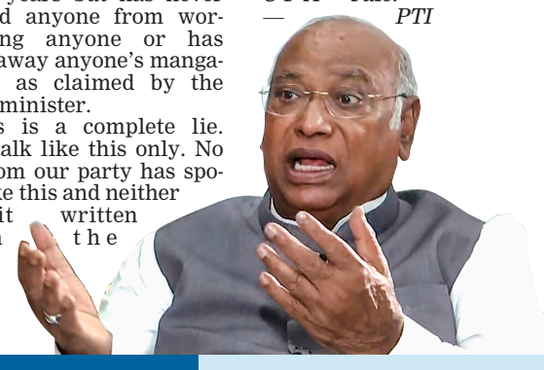
Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge has rubbished Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charge that the Congress will run a bulldozer on the Ram temple if it comes to power, saying it is a "complete lie" and the party respects all sects, religions and honours everyone's faith.

He also asserted that Congress has been in power for 55 years but has never stopped anyone from worshipping anyone or has taken away anyone's mangalsutra, as claimed by the prime minister.

"This is a complete lie. They talk like this only. No one from our party has spoken like this and neither is it written in the Constitution. We respect all sects and religions and honour everyone's faith," Kharge said in an interview with PTI.

He also said that helping the poor in any community is not appeasement, as alleged by BJP.

He also accused the BJP of creating false propaganda against the Congress every time it came out with schemes to help poor during UPA rule. *— PTI*



INDIA BLOC DOESN'T HAVE ANY PM CANDIDATE: AMIT SHAH

GHATAL, 22 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched a blistering attack on the "corrupt INDI alliance" and said the Opposition bloc doesn't have any leader who can become Prime Minister, on Wednesday

While addressing a rally at Ghatal, Shah said INDIA bloc leaders just want their dynasty to move ahead and "neither have any leaders to lead the country nor have any intention for the development of the nation."

Shah, while referring to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir said "PoK is part of India and we will take it".

"The INDI alliance doesn't have any leaders. The INDI alliance wants five PMs in five years. The INDI alliances neither have leaders nor have any intention for the development of the nation," he said.

"Sharad Pawar wants his daughter to be the Chief Minister. Mamata Banerjee wants her nephew to succeed her as chief minister. Stalin (Tamil Nadu CM) wants to see his son succeed him. Sonia Gandhi wants Rahul Baba to become Prime Minister of the country. On the other side, there is Narendra Modi Ji who considers the entire country as his family," he said.

Hitting out at Congress leaders for not supporting the demand of taking over PoK, Shah said, "Congress leaders say it should not be done as they have an atom bomb. But let me say this Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is part of India, was part of India, and will take it. *—PTI*

BJP expels actor Pawan for contesting as Independent

PATNA, 22 MAY

Bhojpuri superstar Pawan Singh was on Wednesday expelled from BJP for "tarnishing the party's image" by contesting Lok Sabha poll "against an authorised NDA candidate".

Singh has entered the fray, as an Independent, in Karakat seat of Bihar, queering the pitch for ex-Union minister Upendra Kushwaha, an NDA partner who is contesting on the symbol of his Rashtriya Lok Morcha.

According to a communication issued by Arvind Sharma, BJP's Bihar headquarters in charge, Singh, who is a member of the party's district executive committee in Bhojpur, has been expelled upon the directions of state president Samrat Choudhary.

In the letter of expulsion, Singh has been charged with "anti-party activities" and "indiscipline" and reprimanded for "tarnishing the party's reputation by contesting against the NDA's authorized candidate (adhikrit pratyashi).

Despite repeated attempts, Singh could not be reached for comments on the development.

The belated action, from the party, comes with just over a week left before voting takes place in Karakat on 1 June. *—PTI*

Pawan Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

PLAINT AGAINST PATRA FOR USING JAGANNATH IN AD

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Wednesday lodged a complaint with Election Commission (EC) against BJP's Puri Parliamentary Constituency candidate Sambit Patra for using a photo of Sri Jagannath temple in an advertisement issued by him in the local media.

In a petition to the chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar, BJD highlighted that the full-page advertisement featuring Patra's picture with Sri Jagannath Temple in the background also had the BJP's "lotus" symbol.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress leader Sagarika Ghose said 'Lord Jagannath' remark has hurt the faith of millions of people, on Wednesday, as she accused the ruling party of using religion for political gains.

Patra on Monday had said that Odisha's most revered deity "Lord Jagannath is a devotee of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi". He, however, later clarified that it was a slip of the tongue and he wanted to mean that the prime minister was an ardent 'bhakt' (devotee) of Lord Jagannath.

"Nothing reveals the egoism of BJP and Narendra Modi than those in BJP who are comparing Narendra Modi to God. BJP candidate from Puri, Sambit Patra, said that Lord Jagannath is a devotee of Modi, he is a "bhakt" of Modi. Now what can be more egoistical than this?" Ghose said. *—PTI*

Kejri says Maliwal assault case has two versions, wants justice

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

In his first reaction on AAP MP Swati Maliwal's alleged assault at his official residence, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said he expects a fair investigation into the matter and justice should be served.

Maliwal has alleged she was "assaulted" by Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar when she went to meet the Chief Minister on 13 May. The police have registered a case and arrested Kumar in connection with it.

In an interview to PTI, the chief minister said the matter is currently "sub-judice" and his comment might affect the proceedings.

"But I expect there will be a fair investigation. Justice should be served. There are two versions of the event. Police should investigate both versions fairly and justice should be done," Kejriwal said.Asked whether he was present at his official residence at the time of the incident, the AAP national convener said he was there. "But I was not present at the scene," he said.His aide Kumar is currently in five-day police custody in connection with the case. Kumar's phones and laptop as well as CCTV recordings have been sent for forensic examination, an officer said. *—PTI*

Man behind Kejri graffiti arrested

New Delhi, 22 May

Delhi Police on Wednesday arrested a 33-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly for allegedly drawing anti-Arvind Kejriwal graffiti at stations of Delhi Metro and inside its coaches, an officer said. The man who wroteit and posted the photographs has been identified as Ankit Goel. *—PTI*

AAP FORCING MALIWAL TO COMPROMISE: BJP

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

BJP on Wednesday claimed that the alleged disappearance of CCTV footage related to the Swati Maliwal case from Delhi Chief Minister's residence and the arrest of Bibhav Kumar shows Arvind Kejriwal's involvement and his attempts to protect his aide.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi launched a fresh attack against Delhi Chief Minister on the raging issue and alleged that he had been putting pressure on AAP MP Maliwal for a compromise.

Rejecting AAP allegation that BJP was behind the entire episode, Sawant told reporters that Maliwal was an old associate of Kejriwal and had herself lodged the police case against Kumar for physically assaulting her at the chief minister's residence. *—PTI*

EVM damaged, cops hunt for YSRCP MLA

Ruling YSRCP MLA barged into the booth & smashed the EVM **PHOTO: PTI**

AMARAVATI, 22 MAY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena on Wednesday said police teams have been formed to look for 'absconding' YSRCP MLA P Ramakrishna Reddy who vandalised an electronic voting machine (EVM) at a polling centre in Macharla constituency of Palnadu district.

CEO said police raided Reddy's residence this morning, but he was not found there.

"His (Reddy) house was raided in the morning. He was not found, so several teams are now moving around to arrest him," Meena told media.

On 13 May, Reddy, who is Macherla Assembly constituency candidate of the ruling YSRCP allegedly barged into a polling station and smashed the EVM

The entire act was caught on a web camera installed by Election Commission, leading to his identification with footage and documentary evidence. According to Election Commission, EVMs were damaged at seven polling stations in Macherla constituency alone on the polling day.

According to visuals aired on some TV channels, a convoy of vehicles belonging to the MLA was found abandoned near Kandi on the outskirts of Hyderabad. *—PTI*

TOUGH BATTLE

8,360 candidates in fray, highest since 1996

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

A total of 8,360 candidates are contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the highest since 1996, according to an analysis of official data.

In the 2019 polls, there were 8,039 candidates, and in 1996, a record 13,952 candidates were in the fray for 543 seats of the Lower House of Parliament.

The 2024 general elections are being held in seven phases, with five rounds of polling completed. The sixth and last rounds will be held on 25 May and 1 June, respectively. Counting of votes will be taken up on 4 June.The fourth phase of the elections held on 13 May had the highest number of candidates in the fray, 1,717 in 96 parliamentary constituencies in 10 states and Union Territories (UTs). The first phase held on 19 April had 1,625 candidates in 102 constituencies in 21 states and UTs, according to Election Commission (EC) data.

The number of candidates contesting the Lok Sabha polls has seen a rise of over four times from 1,874 in 1952 -- the first time elections were held -- to 8,360 in 2024, and the average number of candidates per constituency has increased from 4.67 to 15.39 on an average, according to official data.

There used to be only around three to five contestants per Lok Sabha seats on an average till as late as the sixth Lok Sabha elections in 1977 but in the previous elections 14.8 candidates contested per constituency across the country.

There has been a marked increase in the total number of candidates contesting the elections over the years.

The increasing of security deposit from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000 by the EC apparently helped in bringing down the number of contestants per seat to 8.75 candidates in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. *—PTI*

In the 2019 polls, there were 8,039 candidates **PHOTO: PTI**

Will remove extreme poverty by 2025: Vijayan on 4th year

T'PURAM, 22 MAY

As Left government in Kerala marks its fourth year in office, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Wednesday the government plans to develop a knowledge economy and eradicate extreme poverty in the state by 1 November, 2025.

Listing out achievements of the Kerala government, Vijayan said in a statement that the consecutive Left governments have focused on developing basic infrastruture

"This government is striving to transform Kerala into a knowledge economy, emphasising achievements in infrastructure development and the welfare sector. As part of it, we are addressing deficiencies and eliminating gaps in various areas. Kerala already has the lowest poverty rate in India, and we are now taking steps towards eradicating extreme poverty. By 1 November, 2025, Kerala aims to become a state free of extreme poverty," Vijayan said. Vijayan said the general education system in the state, which was in shambles during the UDF rule, was upgraded to international standards by the Left government. "Left government has given 2.5 lakh jobs through the PSC since 2016. The government has also created 30,000 more posts, and a special recruitment board was formed for the recruitment in state public undertakings," Vijayan said. *—PTI*

6 drown as boat capsizes in dam backwaters

PUNE, 22 MAY

Six persons, including two children, drowned after their boat capsized in the Ujani dam backwaters in Maharashtra's Pune district, officials said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Tuesday evening following strong winds and rains, they said. The victims included three men, a woman and two children, Indapur tehsildar Shrikant Patil said. The boat service operates between Kalashi and Bhugav villages, he said. Following strong winds and rains on Tuesday evening, the boat carrying seven persons overturned, he said. An officer of the assistant police inspector-rank, who was among the seven persons on the boat, swam to safety, the official said. A search operation was underway with the help of the NDRF and local administration, he said. *—PTI*

Avian flu outbreak in Ranchi farm, 920 birds culled

RANCHI, 22 MAY

The Jharkhand government on Wednesday sounded an alert after bird flu cases were reported in a poultry farm in state capital Ranchi, an official said. As many as 920 birds, including 770 ducks, were culled at the Ram Krishna Ashram-run poultry farm – Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra – in Morabadi, the official told PTI. A total of 4,300 eggs were also destroyed, he said. The presence of H5N1, a type of avian influenza A virus, was confirmed in the samples sent to the ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal, the official added. *—PTI*

Farmer trampled to death by elephant in TN

ERODE, 22 MAY

A rogue elephant killed a farmer in Burgur forest area in Erode district on Tuesday, and his dead body was recovered after about 15 hours, police officials said. According to the police, Maadhan, 48, of Bejalatti forest area in Burgur forest range under Erode District Forest area, who owned more than five or six cows and goats, went to Ponnachiamman temple area in the forest to let his cattle graze. Around 4pm on Tuesday, a rogue elephant, which strayed into the area, attacked Maadhan and trampled him to death on the spot. The villagers informed the forest officials and Burgur police at about 6pm, but due to lack of light in the area, both the police and forest personnel could not reach the spot and recover the body of the deceased Maadhan. The police team, along with forest officials, went to the spot on Wednesday morning and recovered the body. It has been sent to Anthiyur Government Hospital for autopsy. *—PTI*

Death toll rises to 17 in Mumbai hoarding collapse

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

The death toll in the hoarding collapse incident that occurred in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area on 13 May has gone up to 17 with the death of a man at a civic-run hospital here, officials said on Wednesday. Raju Sonawane, 52, who had suffered injuries after the hoarding collapsed on a petrol pump in Chheda Nagar locality during gusty winds and unseasonal rains, died during treatment at the KEM Hospital on 19 May, a civic official said. Earlier, the authorities had declared 16 persons, including a retired Air Traffic Control (ATC) general manager and his wife, as dead. The collapse of the giant 120x120 feet hoarding had also left 75 persons injured. Bhavesh Bhinde, the director of the advertising firm that had installed the hoarding was later arrested from Udaipur in Rajasthan. A court here has remanded him police custody till 26 May. *—PTI*

Missing B'deshi MP killed in Kolkata; 3 held

His daughter seeks justice; body still not found

Continued from Page 1...

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

Bangladesh MP Anwarul Azim, who was found dead in Kolkata on Wednesday, had entered India on 12 May. He was last seen on the afternoon of 13 May when he went with friends to a home in Bidhannagar near Kolkata for a medical check-up.

According to a family friend in Kolkata's Bidhannagar, the MP mentioned he would be travelling to Delhi, but there has been no physical presence or direct contact with him since 13 May. Only mobile messages have been exchanged with his family in Dhaka and his friend in Bidhannagar, indicating his intended journey to Delhi.

Concerned by the lack of communication and his sudden alleged disappearance, the MP's family friend, Gopal Viswas, who was informed by the MP's daughter of her inability to contact her father, lodged a missing person complaint at the Baranagar police station in Bidhannagar. Kolkata. "On the morning of 16 May, Azim called his assistant, but could not connect.

Later, when his PA called him back, he did not answer," according to the complaint dated 18 May, 2024. "His daughter called me (Viswas), and said, I can't communicate with my father. Then I (Viswas) contacted all his (Anarul Azim's) acquaintances on the phone, but it was not possible to contact him. I was then requested to come to Baranagar police station on 18 May to register the complaint in the missing diary," a copy of the complaint said.

Mumtarin Ferdous Doreen, daughter of Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker Md Anwarul Azim (Anar), who was found dead in Kolkata, has demanded justice for the murder of her father. She was speaking to reporters at the DB office located on Minto Road in the capital on Wednesday afternoon.

She said: "I want justice for my father's murder. We want a fair investigation of who killed him and why. I want to see it to the end. I want to see those who killed my father hanged."

Mumtarin Ferdous Doreen, daughter of Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker Md Anwarul Azim holding a press conference on Minto Road in the capital city Dhaka, Bangladesh on Wednesday *PHOTO: BANGLA TRIBUNE*

> **I want justice for my father's murder. We want a fair investigation of who killed him and why. I want to see those who killed my father hanged**
>
> -Mumtarin Ferdous Doreen, daughter of Mohammedd Anwarul Azim

Asked whether the police found blood stains in the apartment of the luxury condominium in New Town in Kolkata's outskirts where the MP's whereabouts were last traced on 13 May, Akhilesh Chaturvedi, IG, CID, said, "Our forensic team is examining the suspected crime scene. It's too early to speak about that." Azim was the Awami League lawmaker from the Jhenaidah-4 constituency.

A team of officials from the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate arrived on Wednesday morning at the designated apartment in New Town and were conducting investigations inside till reports were last received.

At least two of the three people accompanying the victim later returned to Bangladesh, police said. *—ANI/PTI/DHAKA TRIBUNE*

RAIN FURY

Commuters holding umbrellas get off a bus amid rains, in Kanyakumari district on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Cyclone alert for Odisha; rains continue in TN, Andhra

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

A low-pressure area has formed in the Bay of Bengal and under its influence northern Odisha districts are likely to receive rainfall, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

The low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal off north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh coast is very likely to move north-eastwards and will turn into a depression by 24 May morning. The IMD has forecast heavy rainfall likely in isolated places of Balasore district from 24 May and moderate rainfall in other northern Odisha districts.

They also cautioned fishermen not to venture into the sea on 23 and 24 May as sea conditions are likely to be rough to very rough. The fishermen out at sea are advised to return to the shore by 23 May, it said.

The IMD said the wind speed would gradually increase to 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph over central. Odisha's Special Relief Commissioner has asked District Collectors to keep the district administration alert and in readiness to meet any eventuality.

Rains continue to lash Tamil Nadu

Many districts of Tamil Nadu continued to receive sharp showers, with Azhiyar in Coimbatore recording the highest rainfall of 15 cm in the last 24 hours.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, here, Thirumoorthi Dam and Amaravathy Dam both in Tiruppur district, received 14 cm and 12 cm rainfall, respectively, in last one day.

In its warning for fishermen for 23 May, the RMC said squally weather with wind speed reaching 50 kmph to 60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph was likely to prevail over Southeast and Eastcentral Bay of Bengal. heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places over Madurai, Dindigul, Nilgiris, Coimbatore, and in many more places. *—PTI*

Heatwave continues to sore R'than & Delhi

Jaipur, 22 May

The Regional Meteorological Department (RMD) of Rajasthan, in view of the searing and scalding heatwave has issued a red and orange alert for various districts. Delhi is also currently witnessing the wrath of summer, with temperatures touching 48 degrees Celsius. IMD has issued a red alert in Delhi also. After the temperature breached the mark of 46 degrees Celsius.RMD said it might cross the 48 degree mark. *—ANI*

₹ 1,758 FEE UNPAID

Court cancels bail of teen involved in car crash

PUNE, 22 MAY

The Justice Juvenile Board on Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to the 17-year-old boy, who allegedly killed two people by hitting them with his Porsche car after consuming alcohol at a bar in Pune.

Police commissioner Amitesh Kumar has said that the 17-year-old boy spent Rs 48,000 in just 90 minutes at one of the two pubs he visited just before the accident. Previously, his family refused to accept that the kid was drunk.

The 2.5 cr car was driven without a license plate

The car involved in the crash had been out on roads without a number plate for months. The registration of the Porsche Taycan, worth Rs 2.5 crore, was pending as the owner had not paid a Rs 1,758 fee. Transport Commissioner Vivek Bhimanwar told PTI that the car was imported in March by a Bengaluru dealer and from there it was sent to Maharashtra after a temporary registration.

Road tax is exempted for electric vehicles in Maharashtra, so the registration of this vehicle was on Rs 1,758 - Rs 1,500 fees. Reportedly, the minor's grandfather had colluded with Chohota Rajan and opened fire on his brother over a property dispute. The police arrested Vishal Aggarwal, father of the accused. PTI with agency.

—PTI

CCTV footage shows the minor in a bar before the crash; Accused's father Vishal Agarwal leaves Pune police station *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB/PTI*

Woman kills child amid fight; roams with body

NAPGUR, 22 MAY

A woman allegedly killed her three-year-old daughter after a fight with her husband in Maharashtra's Nagpur city and roamed around 4 km on streets with the body before informing police about the incident, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Monday evening in the MIDC police station limits, they said. The accused, Twinkle Raut, 23, and her husband Rama Laxman Raut, 24, moved to Nagpur four years ago in search of employment.

They worked at a paper products company and resided at a room in the firm's premises on Hingna Road in the MIDC area, an official said Their relationship was marked by frequent quarrels stemming from mutual distrust, the police said.

PHOTO: REPRESENTATIONAL

The couple again had a fight at around 4 pm on Monday, the official from MIDC police station said.

Amid the heated exchange, their daughter began to cry.

The woman, in a fit of rage, took the daughter out of the house. She allegedly throttled the child to death under a tree, the official said. *—PTI*

No need for panic: TN govt on new FLiRT Covid wave

CHENNAI, 22 MAY

The new Covid wave in Singapore is a "milder infection" and there was no need for panic and Tamil Nadu has the required infrastructure to face any situation, a top official said on Wednesday.

TS Selvavinayagam, Director, Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (DPHPM), said "there has been no significant (hospital) admissions" in Singapore following the outbreak. "In the last few weeks, it is being reported that there are Covid cases in South Asian countries like Singapore. As far as we (TN) are concerned, there is no need for any apprehension, Singapore variant, KP.2 is a sub variant of Omicron and has been reported in some parts of India," he said. *—PTI*

UAPA case: SC sets aside HC bail to 8 'PFI members'

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a verdict of the Madras High Court which had granted bail to eight accused in a case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against alleged PFI operatives, holding that national security is of paramount importance.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal directed the accused, who were granted bail by the high court on 19 October last year, to surrender forthwith and go back to jail. "The impugned order passed by the high court is set aside," the bench said while pronouncing its judgement.

The court observed it can't be denied that national security is always of paramount importance and any act linked to terrorism is liable to be restricted. The bench delivered its verdict on a plea filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) challenging the high court judgement granting bail to these accused.

PHOTO: PTI

The eight accused -- Barakathullah, Idris, Mohamed Abuthahir, Khalid Mohammed, Syed Ishaq, Khaja Mohaideen, Yasar Arafath and Fayaz Ahmed -- were arrested in September 2022. In last year, the apex court had posted the NIA's plea challenging the high court order for hearing after advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the anti-terror agency, mentioned it for urgent listing. The NIA had claimed that the PFI is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation and it was formed only to achieve the "dangerous goal" of establishing Muslim rule in India governed by Sharia law. *—PTI*

No bail to boy for explicit video that led to girl's suicide

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Supreme Court has refused to interfere with an order of Uttarakhand High Court which had denied bail to a minor boy, accused of making and circulating an explicit video of a 14-year-old girl who allegedly committed suicide last year. A vacation bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal dismissed the petition filed by the minor, through his mother, challenging the high court order of 1 April. The boy is accused in a case lodged at Haridwar district. "Having heard senior counsel for the petitioner at length and after carefully perusing the material placed on record, we are not inclined to interfere with the impugned order passed by the high court at this stage, court said. *—PTI*

Three get jail for murdering 71-yr-old neighbour in Kerala

T'PURAM, 22 MAY

A Kerala court on Wednesday sentenced three accused, including a mother and her son, to death for murdering their 71-year-old neighbour near Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram in 2022.

The three persons are allegedly repeat offenders as a case is ongoing in which they are accused of killing a teenager earlier. The Neyyattinkara Additional Sessions Court sentenced Rafeeka Beevi, 52, her friend Al Ameen, 28, and her son Shafeeq, 25, all of whom belong to Kovalam, for murdering their neighbour Shanthakumari to steal her gold ornaments.

Last week, the court found the three persons guilty of all the offences charged. The incident came to light on 14 January, 2022, when the son and friends of Rafeeka Beevi's house owner, who used to hold combined study sessions on the rooftop of the house, saw -- through an open door --blood dripping to the floor from the loft, and informed the authorities.

PHOTO: PTI

Police said a body was hidden in the loft of the house, which was later identified as that of Shanthakumari. The three accused who were absconding were then traced to Kazhakoottam and taken into custody. The accused confessed that they killed the 71-year-old neighbour and stole her ornaments. *—PTI*

FACTORIES BLAMED

Mass fish death in Kochi river sparks protests

KOCHI, 22 MAY

Kochi, Thousands of dead fish were found floating in the Periyar river, sparking protests from local farmers and residents here on Wednesday.

They claim that illegal discharge of chemical waste from nearby factories was to blame for the incident.

Local fish farmers, particularly those involved in cage farming, reported significant losses amounting to several lakhs due to the mass fish deaths. The dead fish were found in large numbers in fish farms across panchayats such as Varapuzha, Kadamakkudy, and Cheranalloor near here since Tuesday. The widespread protests prompted the district administration to take action.

District Collector NSK Umesh has ordered the state Pollution Control Board to urgently investigate the cause of the fish deaths, according to official sources.

The government also formed a special committee under the aegis of Fort Kochi Sub-Collector to study the developments and submit a report in this regard within a week, they said.

Pollution Control Board officials have already collected samples of water and dead fish from the incident site and sent them to the laboratory of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies here for a detailed examination.

Thousands of dead fish were found floating in the Periyar river *PHOTO: PTI*

As per the preliminary assumption by the board officials, fish might have died in masse due to a sudden and significant decrease in the oxygen level in the water. As it is an industrial area, the District Collector also entrusted the environmental engineer of the Pollution Control Board to report whether the mass fish death had happened as a result of chemical effluents being discharged into the river.

CCTV visuals should be examined, and stringent action should be taken against such establishments, if any, at the earliest, the Collector has said. State Industries Minister P Rajeeve said on Wednesday that all necessary steps have been taken in this regard to address the concerns of local people. *—PTI*

THE LAST RITES

Iranians follow a truck carrying coffins of the late President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who were killed in a helicopter crash on Sunday in a mountainous region of the country's northwest, during a funeral ceremony for them in Tehran, Iran, on Wednesday, 22 May, 2024. Iran's supreme leader presided over the funeral Wednesday for the country's late president, foreign minister and others killed in the helicopter crash, as tens of thousands later followed a procession of their caskets through the capital, Tehran

PHOTO: AP/PTI

The 'doubtful Indians' left out of Assam elections

In Assam, a complicated citizenship process has left thousands of people off the voters list during the national election.

Forty-seven-year-old Laxmi Das felt terrible as she watched many of her neighbours in Assam's Silchar city vote in the second phase of the Indian general elections in April.

"The entire country participates in the general election but I can't," she says.

Das is among the 97,000 odd voters in the state who have a "D" or "doubtful" marked against their name and are barred from voting because their Indian citizenship is under question.

Known as the D-voters list, the concept is unique to Assam where migration and citizenship are among the biggest political fault lines.

The state shares a nearly 300km-long (187 miles) border with Bangladesh and has seen decades of migration from the neighbouring country as people fled religious persecution or moved in search of jobs.

Nationalist groups in Assam have long complained that the immigration threatens their cultural and ethnic demography and strains the state's resources.

In 1985, Indian government declared that any person who entered Assam without proper documentation after 24 March 1971 would be considered a foreigner.

In 1997, Election Commission of India (EC), which oversees elections, updated its electoral rolls and identified close to 300,000 people whose citizenship it thought doubtful and marked a "D" against their name. EC used its own officers to ascertain whether these people had documents to prove their citizenship.

If an officer had "reasonable doubt", the case was sent to a Foreigners Tribunal - quasi-judicial forums - where people were given a final chance to prove their citizenship using official documents like birth certificates and land papers.

If the court declared a person a foreigner, they were either deported or put in detention camps.

Over 97,000 people in Assam are barred from voting because their Indian citizenship is in doubt ***PHOTO: BBC***

The process, which continues even today, has been mired in controversies, with legal experts calling it chaotic and confusing. Many say there's no clarity on how the D-voters were initially identified. Others point out discrepancies like the lack of set standards for what documents are acceptable.

In 2019, a family filed a right to information query demanding to know the reason why they were marked as doubtful voters. The EC responded saying it did not have a record of the procedure followed in the case.

"The D-voters are put in limbo until a tribunal decides their fate, which can sometimes take decades," says Sishir Dey, a former tribunal member.

"Until then, they are barred from voting and are unable to avail welfare benefits such as ration," he adds.

Citizenship has long been a convoluted process in Assam.

In 1951, four years after Indian independence, the government prepared a National Register of Citizens (NCR) to determine who was born in Assam and was therefore Indian, and who might be a migrant from Bangladesh (then part of Pakistan).

In 2015, it started updating the list for the first time to account for the new cut-off date of 24 March 1971 set by the government.

More than 30 million residents submitted their documents to prove their citizenship.

After several iterations, close to 1.9 million names were excluded from the final list, which was released in 2019.

In the five years since, neither the federal nor the state government have announced any specific plan for the NRC.

When the list was being updated, D-voters were also allowed to apply but their names were not included because the question of their citizenship was already being determined by a foreigner's tribunal.

Yet, several of them found their names in the final version, marking another confusion in the process.

In 2014, Modi said he would solve the D-voter issue and abolish detention camps from the state.

In 2019, BJP passed a controversial law that it claimed would potentially help those whose citizenship was in doubt. Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) allowed people from six religions who could show that they entered India before 2014 to be eligible for Indian citizenship. However, this law did not apply to Muslims.

The law was implemented in March, two months before the election began this year.

Opposition leaders call it an "election gimmick" while activists say it's logistically impossible to resolve the problem swiftly.

Critics also point out that the CAA is exclusionary as it might help Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh get Indian citizenship, but not Muslims.

In rare instances, those who have already been declared foreigners by a tribunal have found their name on the electoral rolls.

Monindra Das, 64, says he voted in the ongoing election despite spending two years in a detention camp. He was temporarily released in 2022.

The case, which has dragged on for more than two decades, has drained the family's finances.His 27-year-old son Birendra Das says he was forced to drop out of college because his parents had no money.Some are hopeful that their ordeal will end soon.

But others like Birendra D as do not share his optimism:

—BBC News

SALAR ساہر

What is in-flight turbulence & is it dangerous?

The death of a British man and injuries impacting dozens of other people aboard a Singapore Airlines flight that hit severe turbulence on Tuesday highlighted the potential dangers of flying through unstable air.

The exact cause of the 73-year-old man's death is under investigation. Authorities said he may have suffered a heart attack, though that hasn't been confirmed. Based on witness accounts, the number of injuries and the airliner's sharp descent, experts point to the significant safety hazards that in-flight turbulence poses to airline passengers and crews.

While turbulence-related fatalities are quite rare, injuries have piled up over the years. Some meteorologists and aviation analysts note that reports of turbulence encounters also have been increasing and point to the potential impacts that climate change may have on flying conditions.

Most incidents of planes hitting bumpy air are minor, however, and airlines have made steady improvements to reduce accident rates from turbulence over time. Experts advise air travellers to stay vigilant, stressing the importance of wearing a seat belt whenever possible as a first line of protection.

What is turbulence?

Turbulence is essentially unstable air that moves in a non-predictable fashion. Most people associate it with heavy storms. But the most dangerous type is clear-air turbulence, which often occurs with no visible warning in the sky ahead.

Clear-air turbulence happens most often in or near the high-altitude rivers of air called jet streams.

The culprit is wind shear, which is when two huge air masses close to each other move at different speeds. If the difference in speed is big enough, the atmosphere can't handle the strain, and it breaks into turbulent patterns like eddies in water.

"When you get strong wind shear near the jet stream, it can cause the air to overflow. And that creates these chaotic motions in the air," Thomas Guinn, chair of applied aviation sciences department at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, explained.

How common are turbulence-related injuries?

Tracking the total number of turbulence-related injuries around the world is difficult. But some individual countries publish national data.

More than one-third of all airline incidents in the United States from 2009 through 2018 were related to turbulence, and most of them resulted in one or more serious injuries but no damage to the plane, the National Transportation Safety Board reported.

Between 2009 and 2022, 163 people were injured seriously enough during turbulence events to require hospital treatment for at least two days, according to NTSB figures.

Most of them were flight attendants, who are particularly at risk since they are more likely to be out of their seats during a flight.

Now-standardised safety procedures have significantly helped prevent more cases of serious injuries over the years. Fox noted. They include reviewing weather forecasts, having pilots report when they encounter turbulence and suspending cabin service when planes hit rough air.

Can pilots avoid turbulence?

Pilots use a variety of methods to avoid turbulence, including using a weather radar display. Sometimes they can simply see and fly around thunderstorms.

But clear-air turbulence "is altogether another animal", according to Doug Moss, a former airline pilot and safety consultant. It can be devastating, he said, "because the time before the incident can be very calm, and people are caught off-guard".

Is climate change causing turbulence to increase?

Some scientists note that reports of turbulence encounters are on the rise. There are a number of possible explanations for that, but several researchers have pointed to potential climate impacts.

Guinn, of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, explains that some predict climate change could alter the jet stream and up the wind shear, which would consequently drive up turbulence in the air.

In a statement on Tuesday, Paul Williams, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Reading in England, said there was "strong evidence that turbulence is increasing because of climate change".

How can travelers stay safe?

In short, buckle up. Turbulence can be tricky to predict, but experts stress that the first line of defense in the air is keeping the seat belt fastened, whenever possible.

"Planes are generally built to withstand turbulence," Guinn said, noting that passengers not wearing their seat belts is a large source of injuries from in-flight turbulence. While no precaution is foolproof, wearing a seat belt greatly increases an individual's chances of avoiding serious injuries, he said.

"Wear your seat belt," Guinn said. he stressed. "That's just a really quick fix to prevent injury." *—PTI*

Turbulence is essentially unstable air that moves in a non-predictable fashion. The most dangerous type is clear-air turbulence, which often occurs with no visible warning in the sky ahead ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Why is Modi's Varanasi failing to achieve its solar targets?

Mahendra Kumar Singh, a solar vendor in Varanasi — the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi — is having a long conversation on the possibilities related to rooftop solar in the district, complaints of irregularities in electricity billing and poor working style of the state electricity department.

As Singh talks, 50-year-old Dheeraj Pandey eagerly waits to have a word with him. The harshness of the April sun can be felt on his sweaty face and breathless voice. Pandey, a resident of Chitaipur village, wants to install a solar plant with battery backup.

When asked why he does not want to install an on-grid solar plant, Pandey says in an irritated voice: "Villages suffer six-hour power cuts daily. On-grid is of no benefit to us."

An on-grid solar plant works only when there is electricity. Off-grid or hybrid solar plants are connected to a battery. In case of power cuts, such plants can provide electricity according to the capacity of battery.

A balancing act

The residents of Modi's parliamentary constituency proudly claim that there is no problem of electricity here.

After a pause, they also add that when a fault, overloading or tripping occurs in summer, the power is cut for barely half an hour.

However, the reality is that with the onset of summer and increase in demand for electricity, power cuts occur several times a day.

In rural areas, these cuts last for several hours. The maximum temperature in Varanasi reached 43.6 degrees Celsius (°C) in 2021, 45.2°C in 2022 and 44.5°C in 2023. In 2021 and 2022, 20 to 25 heatwave days were recorded. For the last more than five years, the district has been facing temperatures 4 to 6 degrees above normal. This year too, the temperature crossed 40 degrees in the month of April.

In 2023, there were 54 deaths due to severe heatwaves in Ballia district adjoining Varanasi and about 300 people were hospitalised. The entire region of Purvanchal (of which Varanasi is a part) was in the grip of heat wave. In such a situation, a power cut makes the situation unbearable.

In the last three financial years, a difference of 4 to 8 per cent has been recorded between the demand and supply of electricity in India. There was a difference of 4 billion units between demand and supply of electricity in the year 2023-24. In 2022-23, this figure was 8 billion units. Which means the demand for electricity is much more than what we are generating.

Ravish Kumar Chaudhary, who installed a 3 kW solar plant under PM Suryaghar Yojana ***PHOTO: DTE***

How it started?

On 8 January, 2024, Modi had expressed a desire to achieve an ambitious target of installing rooftop solar in 25,000 homes in Varanasi by 31 March, 2024.

A few days later, on 22 January, Modi launched PM Suryaghar Yojana to install solar plants in 10 million Indian homes. Under this, a target was set to illuminate 75,000 homes in Varanasi with rooftop solar within three years.

Solar plants had not been installed even in 500 homes of the district by 2023-end. With the PM's announcement, Uttar Pradesh Renewable Energy Authority (UPNEDA) started pulling all stops to achieve the target set for Varanasi.

For this, 10 officials from other departments were given the responsibility of project in-charge in Varanasi. These include chief medical officer, municipal corporation officials, senior officials of departments like agriculture, horticulture, excise, public works department, forest department, tourism, handloom and food safety.

Targets for rooftop solar were set for all departments after the launch of the PM Suryaghar Yojana. PM's announcement meant that personnel from 34 departments including agriculture, horticulture, excise, teachers, doctors, drug inspectors, etc. were engaged in solar registration for 32 days (before the implementation of the model code of conduct).

Where is the money?

The provision of lump sum money for setting up solar plants is emerging as the biggest hurdle, even as PM Modi has been promoting the PM Suryaghar Yojana as a free electricity scheme.

The estimated cost of a 1 kW solar plant is Rs 65,000 on which a subsidy of Rs 45,000 is available from the Centre and the state. A 2 kW plant costs Rs 1.3 lakh and subsidy on it is Rs 90,000.

The cost of a 3 kW plant is Rs 1.8 lakh.

Ravindra Kumar Prajapati, a resident of Sagahat village in the Rohania area of Varanasi and an electrician by profession, has registered for setting up a 2 kW plant under PM Suryaghar Yojana.

He is busy arranging money for this. "We are a family of five. It is very hot. We just have fans and bulbs. If our solar plant is installed, we will also install a cooler," says Prajapati. He adds that there is a power cut of 6-8 hours every day in his area.

Singh, whom Dheeraj Pandey has come to for advice, says, "Does the section of society targeted by the scheme have enough money? In March, we cut off the subsidy and installed plants at the homes of about 10 people. Their subsidy has not yet arrived. Our money is stuck. If you want to do business, you have to do all this."

Electricity consumers and solar vendors in Varanasi told that people are not showing interest in taking loans from banks for setting up solar plants. They consider paying the monthly electricity bill to be a cheaper option.

—Courtesy Downtoearth

TO CELEBRATE TIES

PHOTO: PTI

Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala met UK PM Rishi Sunak on Wednesday in London to celebrate the ties between the UK and Nepal **PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/@M_KOIRALA**

Oscar-winning composer AP Kaczmarek dies at 71

WARSAW, 22 MAY

Polish composer Jan AP Kaczmarek, who won a 2005 Oscar for the musical score of 'Finding Neverland', died Tuesday. He was 71. Kaczmarek's death was announced by Poland's Music Foundation which had been informed of his passing by the composer's wife. Kaczmarek had suffered from MSA, a rare degenerative neurological disorder. He authored music for movies made in Europe and Hollywood, like the 1995 'Total Eclipse' with Leonardo DiCaprio, and the 2002 'Unfaithful' with Richard Gere and Diane Lane. Global fame came when he won the Oscar for Best Original Score in the biographic fantasy 'Finding Neverland' inspired by the life of JM Barrie, with Johnny Depp and Kate Winslet. Born in Poland in 1953, Kaczmarek wanted to be a diplomat and studied law, but a brief association with the avant-garde theatre of Jerzy Grotowski set him on the musical career. *—AP*

Aus, NZ evacuate scores of citizens from New Caledonia

COLOMBO, 22 MAY

The Australian military has flown 115 passengers on two flights from the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia and a French government flight was expected to evacuate another 100 stranded passengers on Wednesday, an Australian government minister said. Six people have been killed, including two police officers, and hundreds have been injured during recent armed clashes, looting and arson in New Caledonia.
The unrest erupted 13 May as the French legislature in Paris debated amending the French Constitution to make changes to New Caledonia voter lists. Opponents fear the measure will benefit pro-France politicians in New Caledonia and further marginalise Kanaks, who once suffered from strict segregation policies and widespread discrimination.
. *—PTI*

Hunter seeks delay in tax trial set to begin next month

LOS ANGELES, 22 MAY

Hunter Biden's lawyers will press a judge on Wednesday to delay his trial that's set to begin next month in Los Angeles on charges that he schemed to avoid paying USD 1.4 million in taxes. The President's son is seeking to push the 20 June trial date back until at least September, noting that he is also scheduled to stand trial in Delaware beginning 3 June on federal firearms charges. He has pleaded not guilty to both indictments brought by Justice Department special counsel David Weiss, which he has claimed are politically motivated. His attorneys say they cannot adequately prepare for both trials at the same time, and have sought delays — and dismissals — in both cases. If Judge Mark C Scarsi denies his bid to delay the California case, Hunter could be headed to trial in two federal cases on opposite coasts next month as President Joe Biden campaigns for reelection. *—AP*

Ireland, Spain recognise Palestinian state

Israel ordered back ambassadors from Ireland & Norway, who also recognised Palestine as state

TEL AVIV, 22 MAY

Norway, Ireland and Spain said on Wednesday they are recognising a Palestinian state in a historic move that drew condemnation from Israel and jubilation from the Palestinians. Israel immediately ordered back its ambassadors from Norway and Ireland.

The formal recognition will be made on 28 May. The development is a step toward a long-held Palestinian aspiration that came against the backdrop of international outrage over the civilian death toll and humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip following Israel's offensive there.

Norway was the first to announce its decision to recognise a Palestinian state, with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre saying "there cannot be peace in the Middle East if there is no recognition".

At least 140 countries have already recognised Palestinian as a state **PHOTO: BBC**

Several European Union countries have in the past weeks indicated that they plan to make the recognition, arguing a two-state solution is essential for lasting peace in the region.

The decision may generate momentum for the recognition of a Palestinian state by other EU countries and could spur further steps at the United Nations, deepening Israel's isolation.

Norway, which is not a member of the EU but mirror its moves, has been an ardent supporter of a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

> **I have spent weeks and months speaking with leaders inside and outside of the region and if one thing is clear is that Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu does not have a project of peace for Palestine, even if the fight against the terrorist group Hamas is legitimate**
>
> -Pedro Sánchez, Spanish Prime Minister

Wednesday's announcements come more than 30 years after the first Oslo agreement was signed in 1993. Since then, "the Palestinians have taken important steps towards a two-state solution", the Norwegian government said.

It added that the World Bank determined that a Palestinian state had met key criteria to function as a state in 2011, that national institutions have been built up to provide the population with important services.

Some 140 countries have already recognised a Palestinian state — more than two-thirds of United Nations members — but none of the major Western powers has done so. This move could put more pressure continental heavyweights France and Germany to reconsider their position. *—AP*

Israeli Min's visits to contested Al Aqsa site raises tensions

Israel's Far Right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir visited Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound on Wednesday, declaring the contested holy site belongs "only to the state of Israel". Ben-Gvir said the visit was a response to a move by three European countries to recognise an independent Palestinian state. The hilltop compound is revered by Jews and Muslims, and the conflicting claims have led to numerous rounds of violence t. Israel allows Jews to visit the compound, but not to pray. The visit is seen around the world as a provocation. *—AP*

Kyiv in dark after Russia attacks on power grid

KYIV, 22 MAY

Sustained Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid in recent weeks have forced leaders of the war-ravaged country to institute nationwide rolling blackouts.

Without adequate air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs, though, the shortages could still worsen as need spikes in late summer and the bitter-cold winter.

The Russian airstrikes targeting the grid since March have meant blackouts have even returned to the capital, Kyiv, which hadn't experienced them since the first year of the war.

Among the strikes were an April barrage that damaged Kyiv's largest thermal power plant and a massive attack on May 8 that targeted power generation and transmission facilities in several regions.

In all, half of Ukraine's energy system was damaged, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

Entire apartment blocks in the capital went dark. The city's military administration said at least 10 per cent of consumers were disconnected.

For many, it is a taste of what might be in store if Ukraine doesn't find other electricity sources before winter.

Russian tank T-90 fires in an undisclosed location in Ukraine on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

With no end in sight to the attacks on the power grid and without a way to adequately defend

against them, there are no quick fixes to the electricity shortages, Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko explained. Ukraine is appealing to Western allies for more air defence systems.

The first major test of the grid will come in July and August, when consumption can mirror levels in the sub-freezing winter months, the Minister said. *—AP*

WORLD LEADERS ATTEND FUNERAL

Iran's Supreme Leader presides over Raisi's funeral

DUBAI, 22 MAY

Iran's Supreme Leader presided over a funeral on Wednesday for the country's late president, foreign minister and others killed in a helicopter crash, as tens of thousands later followed a procession of their caskets through the capital, Tehran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei held the service at Tehran University, the caskets of the dead draped in Iranian flags with their pictures on them. On the late President Ebrahim Raisi's coffin sat a black turban — signifying him as a direct descendent of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

Iran's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, stood nearby and openly wept during the service.

People then carried the coffins out on their shoulders, with chants outside of "Death to America!" They loaded them onto a semitruck trailer for a procession through downtown Tehran to Azadi, or "Freedom," Square, where

Superme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei leads the funeral prayer on Wednesday **PHOTO: ANI**

Raisi gave speeches in the past. In attendance were top leaders of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, one of the country's major power centres. Also on hand was Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas, the militant group that Iran has armed and supported during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war raging in the Gaza Strip. Before the funeral, Haniyeh spoke and an emcee led the crowd in the chant: "Death to Israel!" Meanwhile, an Iranian official Gholamhossein Esmaili, who travelled in one of the two other helicopters in Raisi's entourage, told state TV that weather had been fine when the aircraft took off. But Raisi's helicopter disappeared into heavy clouds and the others couldn't reach the aircraft by radio, forcing them to land at a nearby copper mine. *—AP*

IRANIANS ACROSS GLOBE CRY, CHEER PREZ DEATH

LONDON, 22 MAY

Among Iranian communities from London to Los Angeles, few tears are being shed over the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, killed in a weekend helicopter crash.

But there are not always loud cheers, either.

While some hope the demise of a powerful figure in Iran's authoritarian Islamic government may bring change, others fear it could result in more repression.

"It's a better world without him," said Maryam Namazie, a UK-based women's rights campaigner. "He is one of the pillars of the Islamic regime of Iran. He has been there since its inception."

But, she added: "Raisi, however much of a pillar he was, is expendable. There are many others to take his place." *—AP*

3K Pakistanis return from Kyrgyzstan after attacks

ISLAMABAD, 22 MAY

Pakistan has repatriated at least 3,000 Pakistanis, mostly students, from Kyrgyzstan in the past week after recent attacks on foreigners over an unknown dispute with migrants, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said on Wednesday.

Pakistan began using special and commercial flight over the weekend to bring people home. More were expected to return later Wednesday, bringing their number to slightly over 4,000 by midnight.

Dar told a news conference in Islamabad that the situation was under control now in the Kyrgyzstan capital Bishkek, where authorities are trying to arrest people who attacked foreigners, including Pakistanis. *—PTI*

Biden, Trump win Kentucky, Oregon primaries

WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

President Joe Biden and his Republican rival, Donald Trump, piled up more delegates on Tuesday as both presumptive nominees won primaries in Kentucky and Oregon.

The symbolic decisions provide a few more delegates to the national conventions and a gut check on where the Democratic and Republican bases stand toward their standard-bearers as the presidential nominating season nears its end.

Even after they secured the nominations and their rivals dropped out, Biden and Trump have continued facing dissent from within their own parties.

Biden has faced protest votes over his handling of the Israel-Hamas war while Trump is still seeing thousands of people voting for long-vanquished rival Nikki Haley.

That trend continued on Tuesday in Kentucky with about 18 per cent of the Democratic vote going to "uncommitted" with roughly 80 per cent of the vote counted. In the GOP race, Haley was winning about 6 per cent.

After Tuesday, eight presidential nominating contests will remain. *—AP*

'FBI was planning to assassinate Trump'

US Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene has accused the Department of Justice and the FBI of orchestrating a plot to assassinate former President Donald Trump.
Greene alleged that the plan was devised during a raid on Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida back in 2022. Accompanying her post was a screenshot of a statement made by Trump on his social network, Truth Social.

Flyers hit ceiling, cried on Singapore plane

SINGAPORE, 22 MAY

At least 140 travellers and crew members who were onboard a flight hit by severe turbulence landed in Singapore on a relief flight on Wednesday.

Passengers onboard SQ321 which was heading from London to Singapore, recounted scenes of "absolute terror", with one passenger saying he saw a woman with an "awful gash on her head", and heard another "screaming in agony".

A 73-year-old British man, Geoff Kitchen, died from a suspected heart attack onboard, while several others remain seriously injured.

Kitchen is believed to have suffered a heart attack when the plane was hit by the turbulence.

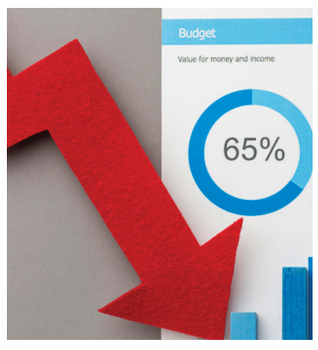
Reports say he was on his way to Singapore to start a six-week holiday along with his wife who was also on board.

The Singapore-bound Boeing 777-300ER diverted to Bangkok following the mid-air incident, making an emergency landing at 2.15pm IST with some 211 passengers and 18 crew aboard.

Some 79 passengers and six crew members are still in Bangkok - where they are receiving medical treatment for injuries.

Andrew Davies, a British passenger onboard the Boeing 777-300ER, told the BBC's Radio 5 Live that the plane "suddenly dropped... [with] very little warning". *—AP*

UK inflation falls to 2.3%, lowest in 3 years



LONDON, 22 MAY

Inflation in the UK fell sharply to its lowest level in nearly three years in April on the back of big declines in domestic bills, official figures showed on Wednesday.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, fell to 2.3 per cent in the year to April, down from 3.2 per cent in March.

That is the lowest level since July 2021 when the global economy was still being held back by the coronavirus pandemic. The fall also takes inflation nearer to the Bank of England's target rate of 2 per cent and is likely to pile pressure on its nine-member rate-setting panel to cut interest rates from the current 16-year high of 5.25 per cent.

The next rate meeting is on 20 June and many economists think the bank will cut borrowing costs. *—AP*

2ND RECORD IN 10 DAYS

Nepal's summiteer climbs Mt Everest for 30th time

KATHMANDU, 22 MAY

Nepal's veteran summiteer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Wednesday by scaling Mount Everest for the 30th time, breaking his own record that he made 10 days ago for the highest number of ascents on the world's highest peak.

The 54-year-old legendary mountaineer reached the 8,849m peak at 7.49 am local time, according to Tashi Lakpa Sherpa, Chief Executive Officer at the 14 Peaks Expedition high-altitude sports company.

Kami summited the peak for the 29th time only 10 days ago.

Kami, a senior mountain guide at the 14 Peaks Expedition and Seven Summit Treks, climbed Mt Everest for the first time in May 1994, the report said.

Kami summited the peak for the 29th time only 10 days ago **PHOTO: ANI**

He was born on 17 January, 1970, and his mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he joined an expedition to the highest peak as a supporting staff.

Kami developed a deep passion for climbing from a young age and has been scaling mountains for over two decades, Tashi Lakpa said.

Besides Mount Everest, he has also conquered Mount K2, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and Manaslu.

Last year, he successfully scaled Mount Everest for the 27th and 28th times in the same season.

His closest rival, 46-year-old Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu, also completed his 27th summit of Everest last year. Altogether, 414 climbers from 41 expeditions have acquired permission to scale Everest this season. Official data from 2023 showed that since 1953's Hillary-Norgay summit, around 7,000 mountaineers have successfully scaled Mt Everest while over 300 have lost their lives. *—AP*

Monkeys are falling dead due to heat in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, 22 MAY

It's so hot in Mexico that howler monkeys are falling dead from the trees.

At least 138 of the midsize primates, who are known for their roaring vocal calls, were found dead in the Gulf Coast state of Tabasco since 16 May, according to the Biodiversity Conservation of The Usumacinta group.

Others were rescued by residents, including five that were rushed to a local veterinarian who battled to save them.

"They arrived in critical condition, with dehydration and fever," said Dr Sergio Valenzuela. "They were as limp as rags. It was heatstroke."

While Mexico's brutal heatwave has been linked to the deaths of at least 26 people since March, veterinarians and rescuers say it has killed dozens and perhaps hundreds of howler monkeys.

Around a third of the country saw highs of 45 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. *—AP*

A vet feeds a howler monkey rescued amid high temperatures in Mexico **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: PTI

Gold falls ₹ 50; silver jumps ₹600

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Gold prices fell Rs 50 to Rs 74,600 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid fall in precious metal rates in overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 74,650 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver prices jumped Rs 600 to Rs 95,100 per kg. It had settled at Rs 94,500 per kg in the previous session. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,417 per ounce, down USD 3 from the previous close. However, silver was trading higher at USD 31.75 per ounce. In the previous session, it had ended at USD 31.60 per ounce.—*PTI*

BHEL shares tank nearly 8 pc after earnings

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Shares of state-owned Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd (BHEL) on Wednesday tumbled nearly 8 per cent after the company reported an over 25 per cent decline in consolidated net profit in the March quarter. The stock tanked 7.58 per cent to Rs 295 on both the BSE and NSE. BHEL on Tuesday reported an over 25 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 489.62 crore in the March quarter, mainly due to higher expenses. Its consolidated net profit stood at Rs 658.02 crore in the quarter ended on 31 March, 2023, according to a regulatory filing on Tuesday. Total expenses of the firm rose to Rs 7,794.11 crore in the quarter from Rs 7,411.64 crore in the same period a year ago. Total income in the quarter rose marginally to Rs 8,416.84 crore in the quarter from Rs 8,338.61 crore in the year-ago period.—*PTI*

JK Tyre shares zoom over 10 pc after March quarter

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Shares of JK Tyre & Industries on Wednesday zoomed over 10 per cent after the company's consolidated net profit increased 54 per cent for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024. The company's stock climbed 10.49 per cent to Rs 446.75 on the BSE.At the NSE, it rallied 10.55 per cent to Rs 447.20 apiece.JK Tyre & Industries on Tuesday said its consolidated net profit increased 54 per cent to Rs 172 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024, on account of higher sales. The tyre maker had reported a net profit of Rs 112 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 3,714 crore for the fourth quarter as compared with Rs 3,645 crore in the year-ago period, JK Tyre said in a statement. —*PTI*

Cipla secures USFDA approval for Injection

MUMBAI 22 MAY

Mumbai-headquartered pharma major, Cipla's US arm has secured final approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its Lanreotide Injection 120 mg/0.5 mL, 90 mg/0.3 mL, and 60 mg/0.2 mL. The injection, pre-filled and ready to use, is an AP-rated therapeutic generic version of Somatuline Depot injection used in the treatment of patients with Acromegaly and Gastroenteropancreatic Neuroendocrine Tumors (GEPNETs), the company informed in its stock filing. It further added, explaining the importance of the approval in the US, "The approval for the generic version of Lanreotide Acetate is in line with Cipla's growth strategy in the complex product segment and will strengthen Cipla's position in the US market. "—*ANI*

RBI gives highest surplus of ₹2.1 lakh cr to Centre

The previous high surplus was Rs 1.76 lakh crore in 2018-19

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) board approved the transfer of Rs 2,10,874 crore as surplus to the Central Government for the accounting year 2023-24. The dividend or surplus transfer by RBI to the Centre was Rs 87,416 crore for 2022-23. Previous high was Rs 1.76 lakh crore in 2018-19.

The decision was taken at Apex Bank's 608th meeting of the Central Board of Directors. Presided over by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, the board reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook.

The workings of Apex Bank during the year April 2023 - March 2024 were also discussed during the meeting.

Apex bank's workings in 2023-2024 were also discussed PHOTO: PTI

The transferable surplus funds for the years 2023-24 were determined using the guidelines set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in August 2019. These guidelines were recommended by a committee led by Bimal Jalan. The committee suggested that the RBI should keep aside funds for unexpected risks, known as the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB), which should be between 5.5 per cent and 6.5 per cent of the RBI's total assets, the release added.

"With the revival in economic growth in FY 2022-23, the CRB was increased to 6.00 per cent. As the economy remains robust and resilient, the board has decided to increase the CRB to 6.50 per cent for FY 2023-24," the apex bank said.

The bank underlined, during accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, owing to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions and the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic, it had decided to maintain the CRB at 5.50 per cent of the Reserve Bank's balance sheet size to support growth and overall economic activity. —*ANI*

NEIGHBOURS IN BUSINESS

India, China to pay in local currency, says Maldives

MALE, 22 MAY

The Maldives on Wednesday said both India and China have agreed to cooperate in efforts to pay for imports in their respective countries' currency instead of the US dollar, which is likely to help Male save almost 50 per cent of the annual USD 1.5 million imports bill from the two countries.

Maldives' Economic Development Minister Mohamed Saeed said he met with the Indian High Commissioner Munu Mahawar two weeks ago, who in turn, said that New Delhi would support and cooperate in arranging for the settlement of import payments in Indian Rupee.

Similarly, Saeed said, he received a letter from China's Commerce Ministry, two days ago, in which Beijing provided assurance it will cooperate in allowing the option to settle import payments in Yuan, the Chinese currency, as requested by President Mohamed Muizzu.

Annually, Maldives imports goods worth USD 780 million and USD 720 million from India and China respectively, the minister had said in April when he had first announced that the Maldives was discussing with India and China if the island nation can make payments for its imports from the country in Maldivian Rufiyaa.

International trade between two countries in local currency is a mutually beneficial mechanism as it helps in saving each other's foreign exchange reserves.

Moreover, the move will mark a significant shift away from the dominant use of the US dollar in international transactions.

In July 2023, the Government of India declared that Maldives was among the 22 countries that were permitted by the Reserve Bank of India to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) as part of efforts to promote bilateral trade in local currencies.

News portal Sun.mv on Wednesday quoted Saeed as speaking with state-run PSM Media: "Maldives imports between USD 600-700 million in commodities from both India and China, each year.

—*ANI*

LAYOFFS SOON?

Paytm net loss widens to ₹550 cr following RBI ban

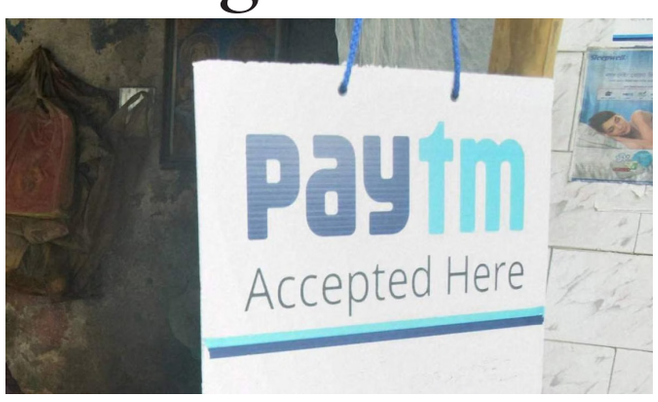
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Fintech firm One97 Communications, which owns the Paytm brand, on Wednesday said its loss in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24 has widened to Rs 550 crore following the ban imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on transactions related to its payments bank.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 167.5 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in a regulatory filing.

"Our fourth quarter FY24 results were impacted by temporary disruption on account of UPI transition etc. and permanent disruption because of the PPBL embargo. Paytm reported a revenue of Rs 2,267 crore, a modest decline of 3 per cent Y-o-Y (year-on-year). Our contribution margin was 57 per cent including UPI incentives, and 51 per cent excluding UPI incentives," Paytm said in a statement.

RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) from accepting deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags, keeping in view the interest of customers, including merchants from 15 March onwards. Paytm CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma hinted at lay off in the company in near future.



The company had posted a loss of Rs 167.5 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in a regulatory filing PHOTO: PTI

"PPBL, the management, on a prudent basis, has determined that the value of the company's investment in PPBL is impaired and, accordingly, has recorded an impairment provision of Rs 2,271 crore, representing the carrying value of its investment in PPBL and disclosed the same as impairment of investment in associate," the company said in an audit note. The revenue from operations of Paytm declined by 2.8 per cent to Rs 2,267.1 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 2,464.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the financial year (FY) 2023. —*PTI*

- The revenue from operations of Paytm declined by 2.8 per cent to Rs 2,267.1 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 2,464.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the financial year (FY) 2023

OYO TO RAISE EQUITY FROM PVT INVESTOR: FOUNDER

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Private investors have approached travel tech platform OYO and it may raise equity at a valuation of up to USD 4 billion, Founder Ritesh Agarwal told employees in a townhall on Wednesday, sources said.

The IPO-bound firm, backed by Softbank, had its maiden net profitable year, posting a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 99.6 crore (USD 12 million) in the 2023-24 financial year.

It also reported an adjusted EBITDA of Rs 888 crore (USD 107 million) for the full fiscal year, up from Rs 274 crore (USD 33 million) in FY23, sources said, citing a presentation shared in the townhall.

Oravel Stays Ltd, the operator of the travel-tech company OYO, will refile its initial public offering (IPO) documents with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) after the refinancing of its USD 450 million Term Loan B (TLB) at a lower interest rate, PTI reported last week.

In FY24, OYO added about 5,000 hotels and 6,000 homes globally.

Gross booking value (GBV) per storefront per month for hotels stood around Rs 3.32 lakh (USD 4,000). —*PTI*

45K tonnes of onions exported post ban lift

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

India has exported more than 45,000 tonnes of onion since the ban on outbound shipments was lifted early this month, a top government official said on Wednesday.

These exports provided relief to farmers after curbs were imposed to keep domestic supplies steady ahead of general elections.

The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production.

To keep onion prices affordable during the election period, the government on 4 May lifted the ban but imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 550 per tonne.

Khare said the forecast of a good monsoon this year will ensure better sowing of kharif (summer) crops, including onion from June onwards. State-owned agencies have started procuring onions from the recent rabi (winter) harvest to build a targeted 5,00,000-tonne buffer stock for the current year, she added.

The country's onion production is expected to fall 16 per cent from a year earlier to 25.47 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year due to lower output in key growing regions like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, according to the Agriculture Ministry's first estimates. —*PTI*

BYJU'S CRISIS: US COURT FINES RIJU RAVINDRAN FOR HIDING $533 MILLION

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

A US court has slapped penalties on Riju Ravindran, brother of Byju's founder Byju Ravindran.

Ravindran has failed to disclose the whereabouts of $533 million reveals a Bloomberg said. The judge concluded that Ravindran's testimony was 'not truthful' and either he is not saying or is refusing to find out.

It was at the show cause hearing of United States Bankruptcy Court for District Delaware, John T. Dorsey found ravindran to be contempt of court with repetitively refusing to disclose about the money.

The court prohibited transferring the money further using loan proceeds. They also found that his brother, Byju's founder Byju Ravindran and co-founder Divya Gokulnath were working in concertwith him.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- They also found that his brother, Byju's founder Byju Ravindran and co-founder Divya Gokulnath were working in concertwith him

—*Salar News withAgencies*

Attrition rates remain high for MBA graduates: Study

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

Attrition rates continue to remain an area of concern among MBA graduates, especially among the entry-level jobs for top-tier campuses, a study said on Wednesday.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (Deloitte India) latest campus workforce trends 2024 study revealed that attrition remained a significant challenge, especially among MBA graduates.

Overall, pan-India attrition rates for infants (new recruits), one- and two-year-old employees for top-tier campuses are 21 per cent, 26 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, it noted.

However, these rates are slightly lower for tier II and III campuses at 19 per cent, 21 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, said the report.

"This year's study reveals a critical need for organisations to rethink their retention strategies, especially for MBA graduates, where attrition rates are alarmingly high. Innovative practices are no longer optional but essential for retaining top talent in a competitive market," Deloitte India Director Neelesh Gupta said.The study further revealed that currently, four of every five executives favour decisions on hiring, pay, promotions, among others, based on skills over job history or network, citing reduced bias and improved fairness, he said."Thus, there is a need for educational institutions to equip students with the multi-faceted skills to succeed in the digital age," he added.

Pan-India attrition rates for new recruits, one- and two-year-old employees for top-tier campuses are 21 per cent, 26 per cent and 28 per cent PHOTO: PIXABAY

Despite higher attrition rates, 70 per cent of organisations actively seek MBA graduates, reflecting their importance in business success and a 5.2 per cent CAGR in compensation over five years.

Meanwhile, the study found that the year-on-year compensation has declined for the first time in five years across tiers of MBA talent and in the top 10 tiers for M.Tech and B. Tech.

This is reflected in a 26 per cent decline in pre-placement offers (PPOs) across degrees and a 33 per cent reduction in campus placement budgets, it stated.This shift suggests a focus on a more thorough skills assessment and a strategic reallocation of resources for streamlined hiring practices.The study also revealed that the internship and pre-placement offers (PPOs) intake by organisations reduced by an average 10 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. —*PTI*

FLIGHT DEPARTURES HIT

AI Express union claims delay in salaries

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Less than two weeks after the airline's cabin crew called off their strike, a union of the Air India Express has flagged concerns about flight delays and cancellations, saying that the reduced number of departures is adversely impacting the salaries of the cabin crew.

The Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU) also claimed that more than 100 cabin crew are sitting idle without flying duties for the last two months due to the non-availability of airport entry passes.

The union represents a section of the airline's cabin crew.On 9 May, the cabin crew strike was called off after a meeting of the representatives of the union and the airline that was convened by the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) in the national capital.

The Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU) also claimed that more than 100 cabin crew are sitting idle PHOTO: PTI

The strike, to protest against alleged mismanagement at the airline, had resulted in significant flight disruptions.

In a letter to the commissioner on Tuesday, the union claimed that cabin crew data was lost during the transition to a new software managed by the scheduling department.

According to the union, the cabin crew are manually assisting the scheduling department base-wise to cover flight cancellations and delays.

Seeking urgent intervention of the commissioner, the union said the reduced number of departures is adversely affecting the cabin crew's salaries.The salaries are also linked to the flying hours of the cabin crew. There was no comment from the official spokesperson of Air India Express. An airline official in the know said the transition to a new crew scheduling system coincided with a section of cabin crew reporting sick, referring to the strike earlier this month. The situation has resulted in a longer stabilisation period and issues have been largely mitigated, the official added. The next round of the conciliation meeting is scheduled for 28 May. —*PTI*

Spice Jet to seek ₹450 cr refund from KAL Airways

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

SpiceJet on Wednesday said it will seek a refund of Rs 450 crore out of the total Rs 730 crore paid to the airline's former promoter Kalanithi Maran and his firm KAL Airways following a Delhi High Court ruling.

A division bench of the court, on 17 May, set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran.

The bench allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's order, passed on July 31, 2023, and remanded the matter back to the court concerned to consider the petitions challenging the arbitral award afresh.

Against this backdrop, the airline in a regulatory filing on Wednesday said it will seek a refund of Rs 450 crore out of the Rs 730 crore it had paid to Maran and KAL Airways.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

"SpiceJet has paid a total of Rs 730 crore, comprising Rs 580 crore in principal along with an additional Rs 150 crore towards interest to Maran and KAL Airways. With the setting aside of the impugned order, SpiceJet is set to receive a refund of Rs 450 crore," the airline said. Shares of SpiceJet rose 2.62 per cent to Rs 62.60 apiece in the afternoon trade on the BSE. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Sachin defends gold at World Para Athletics

KOBE, 22 MAY

India's Sachin Sarjerao Khilari defended his gold medal in the men's shot put F46 category with an Asian record at the World Para Athletics Championship as the country surpassed its best-ever haul in the global competition here on Wednesday. India, now has 11 medals, five of them gold. They bettered their previous best tally of 10 (3 gold, 4 silver, and 3 bronze) in the 2023 edition in Paris. Sachin heaved the iron ball to a distance of 16.30 meters, bettering his Asian record of 16.21 meters set during the World Para Athletics Championship in Paris last year. The F46 category in para-athletics events is for those with moderately affected movement in one or both arms or the absence of limbs.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X /@BABARAZAM

Babar holds the key to success for Twenty20 WC

ISLAMABAD, 22 MAY

The return of tried and tested Babar Azam as captain for the Twenty20 World Cup belies the massive changes in Pakistan cricket over the last 18 months. Since Babar's team lost the T20 World Cup final to England in November 2022, the Pakistan Cricket Board has had four chairmen, the selection panel has been overhauled, and the experiment with Shaheen as skipper was quickly aborted. A new head coach for the limited-overs formats joined the squad in England just weeks ahead of the June 1-29 World Cup in the U.S. and Caribbean. And to top it off, Pakistan will be the last team to confirm its 15-member World Cup squad as it continues to experiment with various combinations.*—PTI*

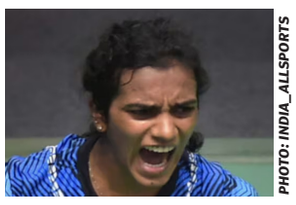


PHOTO: INDIA_ALLSPORTS

Sindhu sails to Malaysia Masters second round

KUALA LUMPUR, 22 MAY

Returning from a break, two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu progressed to the women's singles second round with a straight-game win over Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here on Wednesday. World No. 15 Sindhu, who had skipped the Uber Cup and Thailand Open, notched up a 21-17 21-16 win over Gilmour, who is ranked 22nd, in the opening-round match that lasted 46 minutes.*—PTI*

Neymar to miss start of next Saudi Pro League season

DUBAI, 22 MAY

Neymar is set to miss the start of the next Saudi Pro League season as he recovers from a serious knee injury, Al Hilal's coach said on Tuesday. The Brazilian attacker suffered the injury in October and missed much of the current campaign, but Al Hilal still won the league for a record-extending 19th time earlier this month.
—AP

T20 WORLD CUP

First batch of Team India players to depart for US on 25 May

The tournament will start on 1 June in the WI and the USA

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The first batch of Team India will leave for the US on 25 May to take part in the ICC T20 World Cup, sources said.

The tournament will start on 1 June in the West Indies and the USA. India's T20 World Cup campaign begins on June 5 against Ireland at the newly constructed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York. The India vs Pakistan clash will take place on June 9. They will later play tournament co-hosts USA (June 12) and Canada (June 15) to wrap up their Group A matches.

The first batch of players will consist of players who are not participating in the playoffs stage of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024.

In the tournament, India will be aiming to end their ICC trophy drought, having last won the ICC Champions Trophy in 2013. Since then, India has reached the 50-over World Cup final in 2023, semifinal in 2015 and 2019, the title clash of the ICC World Test Championship in 2021 and 2023, T20 WC final in 2014, semifinals in 2016 and 2022 but failed to secure a big ICC trophy.

PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

India will be aiming to win their first T20 WC title ever since they won the inaugural edition of the tournament back in 2007 in South Africa. In the last edition held in Australia in 2022, India lost to England by 10 wickets in the semifinals.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj

Reserves: Shubman Gill, Rinku Singh, Khaleel Ahmed and Avesh Khan.

—ANI

Sunrisers Hyderabad's batting approach was puzzling: Gavaskar

AHMEDABAD, 22 MAY

Sunil Gavaskar PHOTO: PTI

Legendary Sunil Gavaskar has questioned the "puzzling" batting approach of Sunrisers Hyderabad during the powerplay in the first IPL Qualifier, suggesting their reckless strategy may have cost them the match against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Having cleaned up his fellow Australian Travis Head with a peach of a delivery with his second ball, Mitchell Starc blew away the SRH top-order in his opening spell of 3-0-22-3.

SRH lost four wickets inside the powerplay to be dismissed for a paltry 159, a target KKR shot down in 13.4 overs to storm into Sunday's summit clash in Chennai.

"It was a terrific performance, no question. Such an impressive display with both the bat and the ball. They took four wickets in the power play, and that's where the Sunrisers were pushed onto the back foot, really on the ropes. They couldn't recover from that," the former Indian captain told Star Sports Cricket Live.

"There was a partnership of sorts, but to me, the approach of the SRH batters in those first six overs was puzzling."

With Vaibhav Arora dismissing the in-form Abhishek Sharma in the next over, SRH's explosive opening pair were out for 13 runs.

Gavaskar said after losing two key wickets, SRH's batters should have played more cautiously. Instead, they continued to play aggressively, which led to further losses and ultimately cost them the match. "When you've lost two wickets and the two who have been scoring runs for you, a certain amount of caution is required. *—PTI*

FIH WOMEN'S PRO LEAGUE

India suffers shock 0-5 defeat to Argentina

ANTWERP, 22 MAY

India suffered a humiliating 0-5 defeat to Argentina to begin their European leg of the FIH Women's Pro League campaign on a disappointing note here on Wednesday.

Julieta Jankunas (53rd, 59th minutes) struck a brace, while Agustina Gorzelany (13th), Valentina Raposo (24th) and Victoria Miranda (41st) were the other goal-getters for the Argentines.The Indian women, who were playing their first match under new coach Harendra Singh, looked out of sorts and failed to create any threatening circle penetrations in the first two quarters.

Argentina got their first penalty corner in the fourth minute followed by another a minute later but failed to find the net.They kept up the pressure on the Indian defense with relentless attacks, entering the opponent's circle consistently. The Argentines secured two more penalty corners in the first quarter and the second opportunity was put into use by Gorzelany with a flick to the left of India custodian Bichu.The Indians looked a bit more confident in the second quarter but it was Argentina who controlled the proceedings. Argentina wasted a penalty corner in the 19th minute before Bichu made two fine saves.

—PTI

India suffered a humiliating 0-5 defeat to Argentina PHOTO: HOCKEY INDIA

Hockey: Hina, Kanika strike as India Jr beat Dutch 2-0

BREDA, 22 MAY

Hina Bano PHOTO: HOCKEY INDIA

Hina Bano and Kanika Siwach scored a goal each as the Indian junior women's hockey team began their tour of Europe with a 2-0 win against Netherlands club Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push here.

After a goalless first half on Tuesday, which saw both sides testing each others' strengths, India broke the deadlock with Hina scoring off a penalty corner after three failed attempts with the set-pieces in the second quarter.

Bredase Hockey Vereniging pushed aggressively for the equalizer but success eluded them despite the hosts earning three PCs in the third quarter.

Kanika Siwach found the back of the net to double India's lead in the fourth quarter following which the defenders did well to ward off several spirited attacks from the opponents in the last few minutes.

The Indian junior team will play their next match against Belgium in Breda, Netherlands later on Wednesday. *—PTI*

Praggnanandhaa PHOTO:PTI

PLAYING CARLSEN ON HIS HOME TURF IS NOT A CHALLENGE: PRAGG

STAVANGER, 22 MAY

Having beaten Carlsen several times in the last couple of years, young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa feels he will be under no pressure when he takes on the multiple-time world champion on his home turf during the Norway Chess tournament, which gets underway here on 27 May.

Praggnanandhaa last beat the 33-year-old Carlsen in the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour, in Warsaw earlier this month."I don't think playing Magnus on his home turf is a challenge for me.

Usually, it matters to the player playing in his home but it won't matter so much for me," said Praggnanandhaa, who will also have his sister R. Vaishali playing the Norway Chess Women's Tournament for the first time.

The 11-day tournament will see a very strong field including the likes of world champion Ding Liren and Hikaru besides home favorite Carlsen. Reflecting on his contest with Carlsen at last year's FIDE World Cup where Praggnanandhaa gave the Norwegian a tough challenge, the Indian GM said the experience here would help him in future competitions."I always enjoy a good challenge. After the World Cup last year, this will be my first classical game with him. I am quite excited to play him and equally excited to play the others. No doubt the experience here will help me in future tournaments" said Praggnanandhaa in a Norway Chess release." *—PTI*

Nadal waves to spectators as he leaves the court PHOTO: X / @RAFAELNADAL

Nadal ready for emotional French Open farewell

PARS, 22 MAY

Rafael Nadal will bring down the curtain on his 19-year French Open career with the likelihood of adding to his 14 titles greatly diminished before he leaves behind a record and reputation unlikely ever to be matched. The great Spaniard, a 22-time Grand Slam champion, won his first title at Roland Garros as a teenager in 2005. A week on Monday, he will celebrate his 38th birthday. A former world number one, who is now at 276 in the world, Nadal has only played 15 matches since January last year as a hip injury and then a muscle tear added to a depressing history of physical ailments that have forced him to miss 12 Grand Slam tournaments in his career.

Whether or not the 2024 French Open becomes number 13 will soon become apparent as the draw for the event takes place on Thursday afternoon.

—PTI

India beat Arg 5-4 in shootout

ANTWERP, 22 MAY

The Indian men's hockey team survived some anxious moments before defeating Argentina 5-4 in a shootout after both teams were locked at 2-2 at the end of regulation time in an FIH Pro League match here on Wednesday.

Mandeep Singh (11th minute) and Lalit Kumar Upadhyay scored two field goals for India, while Argentina found the net from penalty corners through Lucas Martinez (20th) and Tomas Domene (60th).

In the shootout, skipper Harmanpreet Singh and Sukhjeet Singh scored twice each with Abhishek being the other scorer.It was a keen contest between India and Argentina in the first half. While world no.6 India dominated the first quarter, the Los Leones, ranked a rung below, were the better side in the next 15 minutes.

The Indians started on a positive note with Sanjay getting the first shot at the goal in the fifth minute, but his reverse hit was saved by an alert Argentina goalkeeper Tomas Santiago. But India was not to be denied for long as six minutes later, Mandeep scored from a field effort after being fed by Rajkumar Pal.

The Indian men's hockey team celebrate after scoring a goal against Argentina on Wednesday PHOTO: X / @FIHOCKEY

The Argentines came close seconds from the first quarter, hitting the post first and then from the rebound Maico Casella scored, but by then, the hooter went up to keep India's lead intact.

—PTI

ARCHERY WORLD CUP STAGE 2

Compound women's team in final, men miss bronze

YECHEON, 22 MAY

World number one Indian women's compound team stormed into the final of the archery World Cup Stage II but the men's team will return empty-handed from the tournament after losing the bronze medal clash to Australia here Wednesday.

The trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur and Aditi Swami, who had clinched the gold medal in World Cup Stage 1 in the Shanghai leg last month, knocked out world number four USA 233-229 in the semi-final.India will now clash with world number seven Turkey in the gold medal clash on Saturday. Turkey had stunned top-seed and local favourites South Korea 234-233 in the other semi-final.

It was overall easy sailing for the Indian women's team, which got a bye into the quarters after finishing second in the qualifying round. They eliminated Italy 236-234 in the last-eight.

Compound Women's Team in Final, Men Miss Bronze Medal PHOTO: PTI

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The world number one men's team of Priyansh, Prathamesh Fuge and veteran Abhishek Verma, who had slipped to fourth in the qualifying round on Tuesday, lost to lowly-ranked Australia 133-133 (10-10*) in a shoot-off.The Aussies, who are world-ranked 21st, took the Indian trio by surprise starting with a 59, and dropping just one point.

The Aussies team of Bailey Wildman, Brandon Hawes and Jonathon Milne continued its fine run and overcame a one-point deficit after the second round to make it 233-all after the regulation four ended.The two teams were 30-all in the ensuing shoot-off but the Aussies edged out the inconsistent Indians by shooting two Xs (arrows closer to centre) to secure the bronze medal.

Having started their campaign with an easy 235-212 win over lowly-ranked Vietnam, India overcame tough competition from Denmark and top seed USA, winning both the matches in shoot-off. Meanwhile, the veteran duo of Tarundeep Rai and Deepika Kumari finished fourth and sixth in their respective qualifiers as the recurve competition got underway.

The 2010 Asian Games silver medalist Rai shot 681 points for a sixth spot in the rankings, while Dhiraj Bommadevara narrowly missed a top-10 finish on X (closer to centre) count after five archers shot 678 with the Indian finishing 11th.The Army duo's solid finish ensured India recurve men's team No 2 seeding in their title defence. *—PTI*